



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

GIFT OF

Dr. Gordon Watkins





LABOUR

LABOUR

THE GIANT WITH
THE FEET OF CLAY

by

SHAW DESMOND,
" "

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1922

HD8390

D4

Printed in Great Britain

TO MY OLD COMRADES

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE writer, who has been a member of the Labour Party since 1906, has special qualifications for the critical analysis of Labour which follows. He has not only had some personal experience of the executive side of Labour and Socialist bodies but he has spoken for Labour throughout Great Britain and Ireland at street corner and in public hall, and widely lectured upon it abroad, although of later years he has been more looker-on than active participator. He stood as Independent Socialist against the Right Hon. John Burns for the Battersea division of London in the 1910 General Election, and has made an intensive study of Labour, both national and international, over a period of fifteen years, not only in this country but also, in many of the countries themselves, throughout Europe as in the United States.

His novels and plays have largely centred around democracy, whilst his writings upon Labour and Socialism have appeared constantly not only in various English periodicals but also in the Continental and American press.

His knowledge of the movement is therefore not that of the armchair but from the inside, whilst his confession that he is still a convinced believer in Labour and Democracy lends especial point to his analysis, an analysis often searching and challenging, but always sympathetic and understanding.

FOREWORD

IN a very real sense, I have written this little book against my own will and only after many years of hesitancy.

I have hesitated because not only am I still a Socialist but because the conclusions to which, rightly or wrongly, I have come, have been forced upon me in spite of myself and because they destroy in my own case, as in the cases of countless others, the illusions of half a lifetime.

I have written it because not only do I believe it to be the democrats who are killing democracy but because I know it to represent what increasing numbers of socialists and labour sympathisers are feeling throughout the world, often without daring to acknowledge it to themselves.

It will be said that, whilst I have criticised Socialism and the world's Labour movement in these pages, I have not dealt with the failures and shortcomings of Capitalism. That, however, has not been my business here, where I am concerned only with Labour.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
PUBLISHERS' NOTE	vii
FOREWORD	ix
I. BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION	I
II. 'THE MAN ON THE SOAP BOX'	5
III. 'THE RED INTERNATIONAL'	16
IV. HOW THE WORKING MAN THINKS	29
V. THE LABOUR PARTY	39
VI. LEADERS AND LED	56
VII. THE WAR AND DEMOS	66
VIII. THE BIRTH OF A PARTY	77
IX. 'THE BRAIN OF LABOUR'	85
X. 'SOCIALIST UNITY'	98
XI. 'DIRECT ACTION'	107
XII. GOAL AND TACTICS	128
XIII. PRESS AND PROPAGANDA	139
XIV. THE FOOLS' PARADISE	154
XV. LABOUR AND WAR	163
XVI. NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM	177
	xi

Contents

CHAP.	PAGE
XVII. 'THE IDEA OF GOD'	188
XVIII. LABOUR AT THE CROSS-ROADS	204
XIX. IF LABOUR CAME TO POWER	217
XX. PROBLEMS FACING THE RISING DEMO- CRACY	228
XXI. 'WHAT SHALL LABOUR DO . . . ?'	242
XXII. 'SPIRITUAL DEMOCRACY'	248

I

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

LABOUR stands to-day at the cross-roads. What it does within the next few years, perhaps within the next year, will decide its destiny in our day and generation. But it will decide not only its own destiny but possibly the destiny of the British Empire and, taking it in its international aspect, the destiny of the world itself.

What the average man, and especially the labour man, whether leader or led, with rare exception, does not realise is that the Great War has shown the feet of clay of the Labour Colossus. Not only that, but it has switched the machine of the British labour movement as that of the international labour movement from its original pre-war track—perhaps to send it hurtling to destruction amidst the cheers of its demented passengers, drunk on democracy.

In Great Britain, the difference between the pre-war labour movement and the after-the-war movement is simply the difference between 'religion' and 'politic.' From the '80's down to 1914, that movement was more a religion than a politic. To-day, it is more 'politic' than 'religion.' The man has become merged in the machine of politics, the machine mastering the man.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

It is a fact, known to every man and woman in the labour movement to-day, that individual members of the Labour Party in increasing numbers, as, indeed, whole sections (the majority of the sixty-thousand of the Independent Labour Party, for example, as shown by its press and recent congresses) are not only dissatisfied with the party machine but are profoundly disquieted in their hearts at the materialistic trend of labour and at that 'beer, bread, and 'baccy' policy which tends more and more to regard the objective of labour as the filling of bellies rather than brains and Demos a body with no soul.

This trend began to show itself in 1906, when the Labour Party was first returned in force to Westminster and, curiously enough, at the very moment when the red flame of democracy glowed most deeply.

It is not only true, as Bernard Shaw wrote long ago, that the Labour and Socialist movement—and here we are taking labour and socialism as more or less interdependent—is one of the most difficult movements in which to remain for the man of vision—but it is true that it has broken the hearts and the hopes of more good men and women than almost any other movement, professedly idealist, of which we have record.

It is no accident that men so differentiate as Mr H. G. Wells, Mr Robert Blatchford, and Mr R. B. Cunninghame-Graham have, like almost any Socialist leader one likes to mention, become deeply dissatisfied with and critical of the Labour Party, which is taken in these pages as the nucleus

of labour. Men and women of power and vision, steam-rollered by the party machine, which, according to Colonel Wedgewood, himself a member of the party in parliament, is 'a lifeless machine which gives no credit to but rather repudiates individual action, is killing young men, and turning active politicians into mere voting machines,' are not likely to continue to place their bruised and bleeding imaginations in the way of the labour juggernaut.

Certain statements, at least, may be made without much fear of contradiction.

In the first place, the labour movement, not only in Britain but in all lands, is hopelessly split upon policy and goal—notably into the two main sections of bolshevists or direct actionists, and constitutionalists, or, as it may be put, into the policy of the bullet versus the policy of the ballot. The leaders, whether in parliament or the trade unions, are really the led. Lastly, the movement as a whole is inchoate, lacks constructiveness, is bankrupt in spiritual driving force, and tends more and more to exalt the material at the expense of the finer things of life. It is as though the body should say to the soul : ' I will lead. You follow.'

The Labour Colossus, seemingly powerful, is really standing on feet of clay and may collapse at any moment. For when the soul leaves the body, the body dies.

But men and women of imagination, still keeping alight the sacred fire which illuminated the pioneers of labour, are, all unconsciously, beginning to evolve 'The New Democracy.' It is a democracy

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

which, dropping the catchword 'Equality' and observing that men and women are enormously varied in quality, development, and effort, is gradually recognising the principle of 'spiritual aristocracy.'

It is upon these men and women, often unknown to one another, often unconscious of their own mission, rising up not only here in Great Britain but throughout the world, that the future of democracy depends. It is that 'eternal minority' from which all progress comes. But all this implies a partial reversion to the original ideals of the labour pioneers and direct opposition to the present methods and goal of organised labour.

We made our god of brute Democracy, which was the God of the Majority, and we found that it had feet of clay. The men and women who are coming will not make that mistake.

II

‘ THE MAN ON THE SOAP BOX ’

THE whole labour movement in this country starts on the soap box at the street corner—that soap box which has become democracy’s historic rostrum. It is the man on the soap box who is the architect of the house of labour. It is the parliament of the street corner upon which the Mother of Parliaments in our day has been and even still is being reared. The seven and a half millions of organised labour in Britain have been gathered together, first, painfully, and later, plethorically, by the man at the street corner.

That the soap box is passing is significant. It marks the passing of a phase. It marks the passing of the labour movement from the religious to the political phase—from struggle to success. And it is success, rather than struggle, that kills.

When in the dawn of this century and particularly in 1906 after the return of the Labour Party for the first time in strength to Westminster, we went out into the highways and byways as the apostles of old, we went out not to expound a political creed but to preach a new religion. The religion of Democracy. We were John the Baptists and, even after 1906, voices crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord. When shivering in icy blast or scorched

under burning sun we stood at the street corner and set up our red flag for the winds to beat upon it and the weather to fade it, we were setting up the symbol of our faith as the Early Christians set up the symbol of the Cross. Some of us were even prepared to die for our faith. And when we sang the opening lines of the Hymn of British Democracy, not the 'Marseillaise' but 'The Red Flag' :

' The people's flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our martyred dead. . . . '

we did so with all the fervour of the Christians in the Roman Coliseum, but with the roars of the crowd instead of the roars of wild beasts in our ears—sometimes indistinguishable. And sometimes there was more than a flavour of '*Christiani ad leones!*' about those sacrificial meetings of the streets.

You can see us standing on a four-inch plank on London's Mile-End Waste, a little self-conscious, a little self-satisfied, but entirely genuine, holding on to the edge of circumstance, what time the thunder of the buses and the howls of the darkest East are sounding in our ears. Or, standing upon one of the *Clarion* propaganda vans, holding a hostile crowd with fear trembling in one eye and defiance shining out of the other—not an uncommon combination for the propagandist of those days—sometimes thanking the democratic deities when we finally escaped the jaws of the hungry and angry gentlemen beneath the tailboard

of the 'William Morris' van, itself a palatial waggon, amidst the exquisite carvings of which would be entangled such Labour texts as 'Brotherhood is life—the lack of brotherhood is death.'

A text which received pointed emphasis for the writer one fine night at an East End meeting when a stone from the brotherly bosom of the Great Unwashed smashed the scroll-work of the van just above his left ear. But our sufferings were sweet nothings to those of our predecessors, for it was in the same district that Will Thorne, M.P., told me that in the early wilder and woolier days of the movement before he had exchanged the soap box for a seat in parliament, he had been presented at several and various times with bottles, British eggs (assorted), and even a cat, in the later stages of decomposition.

But even 'the darkest East' never held in its bull neck and unshaven jowl such malignant threat of deviltry as some of the aboriginal denizens of the remoter country districts—dumb, dangerous devils.

There was the patriarch of one of the less accessible yokel-tribes of farther Essex who, leading a ferocious mongrel with a head like a calf, greeted a flying column of our 'Clarion Scouts' with the encouraging: 'Orl right. Yew tark Socialism at your own risk and chance what's comin' to yew—Buldger 'ere' (that was the dog) 'can do 'is bit. Muddle-in-the-Hole don't want none of your pesky interference—it don't know nothin' about nothin' and what's more it don't want to know nothin' about nothin' . . .' And

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

then, inquiringly: 'When be yew a-goin' to begin?'

It was the spirit behind the historic meeting at Dunmow, of 'flitch of bacon' fame, when the yokels, contemptuous of the Good Samaritans who had come to save, either passed by on the other side, or hid themselves behind walls and fences, or entrenched themselves in ditches—but all holding that dumb, dangerous threat. I can see them now with their heavy, dull faces as they gradually crept in to the taunts of the speaker surrounded by his devoted band of standard bearers, finally rushing the platform from under him and hurling him and his little band into oblivion. In some such way it seemed to our excited imaginations must the wild beasts of the Roman arena have crept in upon their prey.

Not that our opponents always used the mailed fist. Sometimes the velvet glove did its work. We have been more than once silenced by silence—by that steady, dumb ignoring of a hostile neighbourhood, and once even the writer has had to resort to mock combat with one of his comrades (this at a street corner in Penge) in order to gather a crowd. (It is a regrettable fact of human nature that no Demosthenes ever fledged could hold a British crowd against a dog fight round the corner.) In one case when our brass-lunged orators descended upon the perennial calm of an old-world village not far from London and opened a meeting which consisted of two ducks and a dog, the villagers, with portentous subtlety, simply turned out and turned on the local brass band,

'The Man on the Soap Box'

which with two muscular drummers and a pair of leather-lunged trombonists, finally stifled the well of Socialist eloquence, from which Truth was being drawn in disregarded bucketfuls. All unawed by the fact that in the magnificent high-powered automobile which that day had replaced the soap box as pulpit, there stood not only the gracious presence of the lady to whom many of the stiflers of truth probably owed rent at that moment—the Countess of Warwick herself to wit, but also the man with the chest and biceps of a navvy who could have knocked out any man there in one-two time—Mr Jack Jones, the present silver-tongued member for Silvertown, at his side a well-known London journalist and a clergyman in Holy Orders.

And then one is transported from the little village with its audience of yokels to the centre of the world's metropolis—to that October Sunday afternoon in 1909, when R. B. Cunninghame-Graham of the magic pen, standing upon the Trafalgar Square plinth, which has become the altar of democracy, with his pointed beard and bushy iron-gray hair carefully brushed back from the delicate artist-face, like some Vandyke stepped from its frame, is haranguing the assembled thousands at the meeting of protest against the execution of the Spaniard, Enrico Ferrer. What time his ancestor, the First Charles, sitting upon that fabulous horse to his right rear, looks on in stony disapproval.

And once more the writer is seated with him and young Victor Grayson in an open taxi, leading

dirty, dishevelled democracy, a red rag on the end of a pole flaunting itself drunkenly at its head, down Whitehall and round to Grosvenor Gardens. Graham waving his delicately manicured hand, with the tan of the Algerian desert still upon it, a knightly figure of a man, Grayson shouting, the crowd cheering, and the writer wondering what devil possessed him to suggest from the plinth an assault upon the Spanish Embassy and what was going to happen next.

Those were days full of queer extremes and queer situations. There was the experience of one of our best known propagandists, a highly respectable personage, who found himself after a meeting in one of the more primitive Welsh mining districts, dead tired and praying for bed. He was told by his host to go straight up, that he would find his bed in the far corner, and 'would he be good enough to lie as close to the wall as possible?' Slightly obfuscated, he did as he was told and fell fast asleep, awaking in the dawn of the morning to find his host's wife snoring peacefully on the pillow by his side !

He thought of his reputation. He thought of 'the movement.' A cold sweat broke out upon him. For one mortal hour he lay there, afraid to stir, but at last taking his courage in both hands crept over the prostrate lady and had just reached the floor when the good woman awoke to say, smilingly: 'Good morning! Willie's gone to the pit. I suppose you'll be dressing now—it's a bit cold.'

There was but one bed in that cottage, and the

miner, honest man, himself incapable of guile, thought it the most natural thing in the world to sleep three in a bed. Those who have ‘propaganded’ in certain parts of Wales will be able to relate experiences nearly as strange.

And there was the contrast of Warwick Castle, with its time-embattled towers hanging over the Avon, and its century-old greens and armouries invaded by a mass of *Clarion* socialists, respecting, some of them, neither God nor devil—only man! And the armoured Warwicks are staring at them like the men of iron they were, and the peacocks have folded their tails in horror; and the ghost of Cæsar’s Tower stands gray and grim in stony silence before the red banners of twentieth century democracy. They were amazing days.

Like some cinema film there passes across the retina of the mind that extraordinary assortment of propaganding humanity of those days and of the days before that, all moved, whatever their station or type, by the passion that launched Buddha, Mahomet, and Peter the Hermit upon their reluctant worlds—the passion to persuade.

One sees them in lengthened crusading perspective. William Morris, mediævalist and poet, speaking in his halting sentences from his heap of slag to his grimy-faced auditors. H. M. Hyndman—the Social Democrat who refused a ministership of education in a British government, ‘for conscience’ sake’—of an utter Sunday afternoon respectability, top-hatted, frock-coated, bourgeois and black, orating with all the intellectual force and eloquence of which he still is master to a crowd

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

of thirty thousand in Trafalgar Square, knowing as little of them or they of him as though he had dropped from Mars. The Countess of Warwick addressing the rag, tag and bobtail of the London streets in one of Paquin's spring 'creations.' John Burns, with his red flag, thundering like Jove. Philip Snowden, his tongue dipped in corrosive sublimate, using it unerring as a surgeon does a scalpel, laying bare nerve and bone. Ramsay MacDonald, like some converted Machiavelli, a capable fated figure of fierce eye and cold fire, trying to plumb the shallows of the Saxon intellect. Victor Grayson, his antithesis, of 'broken bottles' and Colne Valley fame, the Labour movement's greatest propagandist, with a voice like the Bull of Bashan, flaming meteorlike across the Red firmament, holding all in the hollow of that tremendous voice so soon to be extinguished. Keir Hardie, coming in at the tail of my Belfast meeting of Orangemen and Nationalists, steering his way unerringly between the orange Scylla and the green Charybdis which gaped for him, his plaid bow flaunting itself as like some bard of old he spoke to harp invisible, but always between him and his audience that veil of strangeness which prevented any from getting close to the Father of Labour. Jim Larkin, now languishing in American jails, a pillar of fire and ice, with fierce blue eye and long sheering nose, heading our march like a second Cortes to the sound of the pipes and drum into the village of Swords, near Dublin, 'pride in his port, defiance in his eye.' Margaret Bondfield, earnest little comrade, staunch, setting her eager,

halting feet on the path that was to lead her to the high places of labour, upon which, for the idealist, crosses stand in waiting. Her friend, Mary Macarthur, hard as her native cairngorm, with underneath a jealous, passionate heart, addressing a bevy of factory girls, first ribald, then adoring. Robert Blatchford, writer of beautiful, simple English, author of *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British*, Socialism’s greatest propaganda literature, for all his sweeping black moustache and swarth, pirate face, speaking in shy, halting sentence for the ‘Clarion Scouts’ at the Holborn Town Hall, surely, and excepting H. G. Wells, also Clarion Scout, the poorest speaker in the movement.

And, last of all, Bernard Shaw, with his boy-like figure, all nerve and vital in the Irish way, making fun of his audience, himself, and all the world, with, underneath, the most serious purpose in all the movement ; and following him the barrel-like body of that great Cockney, Will Crooks—Quixote and Sancho Panza come to life.

And then those two unknown dockers, with broken mouths and calloused hands, who used to walk iron-shod from Millwall to the West End begging for God’s sake for a few socialist leaflets to distribute to their pastors and masters—for light still came from the East!

But all of them, Saxon and Celt, man and woman, often vitally opposed upon tactics, often virulently hating one another—all consumed by a sort of sacred fire—the fire of the propagandist.

And so it is that I ask myself to-day what it

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

was that we assumed—for our assumptions were tremendous and terrifying?

We assumed that, despite differences as to tactics, all the socialists and workers not only of Great Britain but of the world stood for the same thing and aimed at the same goal; that we were on the threshold of a new era, when, if the socialist lion was not to lie down with the capitalist lamb, the lamb was to be eaten by the lion for his own good and digested at leisure; that the Democracy would advance peacefully and steadily by education and the vote; and, that last strange delusion, that once the poverty problem was solved, all our intellectual and spiritual problems would be solved with it.

We had but to blow our trumpets seven times outside the walls of the capitalist Jericho, and lo! the walls would fall and it would be transformed into the New Jerusalem with streets of shining gold.

For behind our propaganda was the most powerful trinity on earth: feeling and imagination and passion. It was a trinity aimed at the belly in order to reach 'the soul of the crowd.' We at least believed that the path to the soul lay through the stomach!

But what no single one of us saw was that the 'ard and 'orny' pioneers of the soap box were to be replaced by Melton-coated followers in expensive halls, travelling in comfortable carriages, speaking comfortable words, and living upon comforting food. What we did not see was that the intellectual and spiritual (although we never

'The Man on the Soap Box'

used the word) goal of the poet, William Morris, the writer, Robert Blatchford, and the artist, Walter Crane, was to become a goal of 'more money for less work.' That our cry of 'Bread and roses!' was to become just plain 'Bread and beer!'

And so the soap box is passing, and with it the spirit of the soap box. It was the spirit of struggle, of protest. It has been replaced by the spirit of success, of power, of plethora. 'The soul of the crowd' has become the belly of the crowd.

III

‘ THE RED INTERNATIONAL ’

FROM the soap box to the Red International is but a step. The little street corner meeting in a London slum is but the national nebula of the international galaxy of fiery stars—stars often moving in contrary orbits, still more often colliding, but, still, forming that loosely knit system of socialist democracy throughout the world known as the Red International, which, before the war of 1914, threatened to dominate the earth, but which has now been shattered throughout the political firmament.

For each word spoken, each leaflet distributed, at any Labour or Socialist meeting in any country, spreads like a wireless message in multitudinous ramifications to the farthest corners of the Red International.

No man can grasp the British Labour movement who knows nothing of its international significance, and in this book, although primarily concerned with British labour, we are also dealing with labour as a whole. For the idea behind this movement, as all other labour movements throughout the world, is *the international idea*. The masses of the workers may be, and are, often unconscious of it, but it is this idea which is always expressing itself in one form or other.

Men everywhere are brothers. At least, working

men. If they don't love one another, they *ought* to love one another, nay, more, they *shall* love one another, even if, as Lenin has decided, they have to be welded together by blood and iron.

The British labour movement, like all other labour movements, has ‘ Socialism ’ as its ultimate goal. The Constitution of the Labour Party states it explicitly in the ‘ Party Objects ’: ‘ To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production. . . . ’ It seeks alliance with the workers of the world in the ranks of the ‘ Red International ’ against the present competitive system of society, that is, the capitalist system. It aims at the gradual replacement of this system by a system of Socialism, or co-operation. ‘ Socialism ’ may mean anything to the labour man, according as to whether he is tinted a pale collectivist pink or is of deep crimson dyed in the bolshevist wool.

It may mean, for instance, ‘ the mechanical state ’ of collectivist Socialism, a state administered by a central bureaucracy through a horde of officials, and the last adherents of which are possibly Mr Sidney Webb, Mr Bernard Shaw, and their friend the enemy, Mr H. M. Hyndman, although even these ‘ die-hards ’ must have had their views of the future society modified by the facts of the last seven years. (Already Mr Shaw has shown in his *Back to Methuselah* that he has become partly converted to ‘ the idea of God,’ which indeed is the antidote to the official.) Or it may mean a

vague, benevolent anarchy of the Tolstoian type in which the official will have no existence. But it may mean a dozen other things, from 'Guild' socialism—that strange mediæval reversion which may yet profoundly affect the modern trade union—to simple 'Labour administration.'

The transient phenomenon of Bolshevism, it must be remembered, is only a means to an end—not an end in itself. It is a method, not a goal. Its business is simply 'to hold the candle to the devil' by advocating 'the dictatorship of the proletariat,' that is the dictatorship of society by the working-man, that is 'autocracy,' as a necessary intermediate stage to the 'bureaucratic socialist' millennium, from which, incidentally, socialists throughout the world are to-day praying to be delivered. Mr Robert Williams, Secretary of the Transport Workers' Federation, and, whatever one may think of his views, one of the few absolutely whole-souled labour leaders, makes quite clear in one of his books what this 'dictatorship' may mean. He writes: 'An iron discipline will, of course, be necessary . . . in the transition from Capitalism to Communism.'

The one thing which unites almost all shades of socialism and labour throughout the world is 'communism,' that is the abolition of the principle of private property and the system of trading for 'profit,' and the holding of all things, save, perhaps, toothbrushes, in common.

There have been three 'Red Internationals.' The First International was formed in London in 1864 under the title of The International Working

Men’s Association, the anarchist Bakounin and the socialist Karl Marx fighting together over a period of many years, the former to make it an anarchist-communist International, that is, an International opposed to ‘the State’ and to all government, the latter, a socialist International, Marx finally triumphing, the First International perishing in the struggle and finally expiring in Philadelphia in 1876. The Second International came into being in 1889 at the Paris International Socialist Congress, and had at one time, perhaps, some twenty millions of trade unionists and socialists affiliated, although the number of those in sympathy with the Red International has been placed as high as fifty millions. The Great War shattered this second dream of a world labour party, the Second International to-day being practically non-existent, although attempts are made from time to time to galvanise the dead into life.

The Third International, known as the Moscow International, which denounces the Second International as a bourgeois institution ‘whose stinking body pollutes the air,’ was formed by Nicolai Lenin after the recent Russian revolution and is a sort of International *gamin*, stone-throwing and mud-slinging, whose hand is against all Socialists who are not Bolsheviks. It has a scattering of adherents in the ‘Communist’ (the modern name for ‘Bolshevik’) parties of various countries but it is no more an ‘international’ than are the Latter Day Saints.

All this in spite of the fact that at its 1921 meeting in Moscow it had men and women

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

delegates not only from all the white countries but from Afghanistan, Korea, China, and even Samoyedes from the Bering Straits. How much some of the semi-barbaric Orientals knew of Communism or Karl Marx may be easily imagined, if not described.

What the Third International thinks of the Second is clearly intimated by the most prominent adherent of the Moscow International in Great Britain, Mr Robert Williams, the stormy petrel of the 'Transport Workers' Federation. He writes: 'Men who, before the war, had predicted the downfall of European capitalism, and who by lip-service championed the cause of the oppressed of all lands, men like Hyndman, Guesde, Plekanov, Schiedemann, and Vandervelde, delivered the death-blow to that International during the period of the war. Notwithstanding the palpable recreancy, not to say treachery of these erstwhile social revolutionaries, these class-war advocates, others remained loyal to the cause of international working-class solidarity.' But alas! Mr Robert Williams has now been expelled from the Communist Party because even he has not been extreme enough for the terrible Third. Now a 'Fourth' International, called the International Association of Socialist parties, is just putting up its infantile head at Vienna, appearing to regard all the other Internationals as anathema. And so it goes.

This Third International of Moscow rose phoenix-like from the ashes of the second, but is a bird of a very different variety—at first an eagle of liberty to herald raucously the advent of an age

of freedom, but to develop, as time went on, into the simulacrum of its predecessor, the double-headed eagle of Czardom, a bird which speaks with two voices, the voices of autocracy and democracy, with always underneath the talons of dictatorship. And like its predecessor, it has developed its *agents provocateurs*, its spies, and all the other appurtenances of dictatorship. The new age was one in which Nicolai Lenin had but replaced Nikolai Romanoff: both of them desperately sincere fanatics. *Le roi est mort. Vive le roi !*

To one who, like the writer, took part in various International Socialist Congresses, to which the Trade Unions and Socialist parties of Great Britain as of the world sent their delegates as to the supreme executive of Labour, our facile assumption that throughout the world, labour, united fundamentally, stood for the same thing and worked towards the same goal seems to-day frankly incredible. Yet not one of us saw its inherent falsity. We were blind, leaders of the blind, and we both fell together into the ditch digged for our feet by the War of 1914.

I think we ignored almost everything that was vital in humanity as we ignored everything that was inconvenient to our theories. Some of us, because we are human and hate to admit that we have partly builded upon false foundation, are still ignoring and still hug our delusions. Our assumptions sprang, however, from an idealism and a fanaticism which refused to face facts, as fanatics, perhaps fortunately for evolution, have always refused to face them.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

There was the famous International Congress of Stuttgart of 1907 at which we had not only delegates from nearly every country of the Old and New worlds, but also Japanese and Indians—the congress which was to be the ‘Open Sesame’ to the International Labour Millennium. We already saw shining above us the Red Flag, and beyond it that *Fata Morgana* of Internationalism, the Palace of the Commonwealth of Man, over the lintel of which was written: ‘Through blood to brotherhood.’ But even then, there were some of us, not leaders, children watching their elders, and, like all children, taking notes and critical.

We were assuming at Stuttgart, as at all those other congresses past and to come, that the stolid German Marxist, the sceptical French analyst, the soft-hearted English sentimentalist, the Irish individualist, the Danish materialist, the Indian dreaming God knows what dreams in the twilight of the gods that is the Asiatic mind, the impulsive, unpractical Russian, and the smiling, inscrutable Japanese (for none of us knew anything about him) . . . all stood for the same thing if they did not always think the same way.

For we saw the immediate goal of the flesh, the goal of the full belly, common to all hungry humanity. What we did not see were those distant, shadowy goals which are not of the earth but of the things behind the earth—not of the flesh but the spirit—the goals which divide mankind unerringly and everlastingly. We forgot that ‘man does not live by bread alone.’ It is what, despite

all its fine phrases and very real idealism, the Red International has always forgotten—what the British Labour Party to-day is forgetting.

Our innocence, like our courage, was dazzling!

Tactics, of course, might separate us—but they were just ‘tactics’—those tactics which really were vital because they were ‘temperament.’ Keir Hardie and Bebel—Celt and Teuton; Ramsay MacDonald, Scot, and Malatesta, revolutionist; Herbert Burrows, theosophist, and Robert Blatchford, determinist; Bernstein and Bissolati; Labriola and Larkin; Roubanovitch and Plechanoff, Victor Grayson, Philip Snowden and H. M. Hyndman; Madame Sorgue, syndicalist, ‘the most dangerous woman in Europe,’ with her Buffalo Bill hat and crimson *corsage* splashing the congresses of European labour; Mr and Mrs Sydney Webb with George Bernard Shaw, a star chained to their triumphal waggon; Emile Vandervelde; Victor Adler, and heaven alone knows what other *olla podrida* of this witches’ pot of Internationalism—all were, however mistakenly! working towards the brotherhood of man, if not the fatherhood of God.

God, of course, didn’t matter. Some of us believed in him—some did not. Anyhow, he was a national god and no national god was going to get into our international socialist movement. Society had suffered so much from priest and church in alliance with statesman that we had to get rid of the Idea of God—at least in the beginning. To those of us who believed in secret, God somehow or other would assert himself in due course

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

when every little Mary Ann and Tommy had three meals a day and a clean pocket handkerchief to wipe their dear little noses on. . . .

Nationality and nationalism were effete ideas—capitalist superstitions. Of course, they were also inconvenient facts, but they were passing. Race—well, race was another and still more unpleasant fact—but the heart of the Yellow Man was the same as the heart of the Brown or the Red or the White—only more so!

And yet even those early days of Stuttgart, with its kaleidoscope of temperament and colour and its bewilderingly varied concept of morals, individual and national, might have given us pause as the Copenhagen International Congress of 1910 with its fierce battles and recriminations between the little nations of Central Europe—the writing on the wall for those with eyes to see, foreshadowing the bloody events of 1914—might have given us pause.

Yet with all those ridiculous sides, with all our lack of understanding of human beings, with all our mutual hates and quarrellings and the wire-pullings of ambition which we had taken over as inheritance from our pastors and masters—there was something very wonderful, something symbolical, about that ghostly forerunner of the Parliament of the World.

Dreamers of dreams. But at least we *dreamt*.

One can still see down the vista of congresses, national and international, Bebel's pale, thoughtful face, feel that cool, steady clasp of his hand and hear him declare that future wars were impossible

because the Fatherland itself could not bring its mail-clad millions even to the frontier without inviting national bankruptcy! And little, dark, fiery Marie Luxembourg, in her white dress in the clean air of Copenhagen, with something of the hunchback in her face, all unconscious that the day was nearly on her when, like a rat given to the dogs, she would be torn to pieces in the streets by her own countrymen and perhaps by her own comrades. And Clara Zetkin of the motherly bosoms and the great expansive mouth is driving with me once more in a London hansom, telling me of her hopes and fears for the International Socialism that was to her life itself. Old Singer, giant and millionaire, is once more presiding with heavy effectiveness over our Franchise Commission in the mellow German sunlight at the Stuttgart Liederhalle; Jaurès, great bull of a man, is flinging out the smoke and lava of his burning periods; and Madame Kama, dusky pioneer of Indian unity, is holding up upon the platform of the Stuttgart congress the 'Bande Mataram' flag of a united India with the layered colours of Mohammedan and Hindu and Parsee and Buddhist, the sun playing upon it through the high windows. And the Germans are laughing at us as we sing our war-chant, 'The Red Flag,' because it is the tune of a Catholic hymn in the Fatherland, the land where Socialism means materialism—and we are hurt and puzzled. And I am looking once more at Harry Quelch of the Social Democratic Federation, like an honest watchdog who has learnt his old lessons so well that he cannot learn new,

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

reproaching us in the Concert Palais at Copenhagen for voting for his *bête noire*, Ramsay MacDonald, for the chairmanship of the British section. And 'Big' Bill Haywood, 'boss' of the American 'I.W.W.', now colleague of Lenin in Moscow, a heavy-paunched, leather-belted giant, one empty eye-socket covered by the slouch of his great desperado hat, is sitting on the iron stretcher-bed in the little Copenhagen hotel, to tell me of his contempt for the constitutionalists and his faith in 'direct action,' what time the bed, complaining to heaven under the 280 lbs. of his weight, contemplates direct action on its own account by indirect collapse. And Sorgue, like a second Cassandra, is wallowing in dreadful anarchistical prophecies of the coming shattering of the International through the politicians—and, like her prototype, is not believed.

And Vaillant, gallant old son of the Commune, is peering with blinded eyes at new comrades and strange policies, whilst the Russians—little whole-souled Madame Balabanov, polyglot and exile, and the beautiful Kollontay, both now in the Bolshevik Moscow administration, are trying vainly to bridge the temperamental and intellectual chasms which cut them off from their British comrades; Sam Gompers, like a wise old frog, hater of Socialism and 'all things to all men,' is explaining to me owl-like in the streets of Ipswich after a Labour congress to which he has come like some imperial demagogue attended by a cohort of 'fraternal delegates,' how wise he is and how foolish are his opponents and what a wonderful thing is the

American Federation of Labour; and Keir Hardie, the young man with the old face, clean-cut and hard as a piece of Aberdeen granite, is singing 'Annie Laurie' in Stuttgart to half the nations of Europe who are wondering what the devil he would be at.

And there is Daniel de Leon, that mad quixote from the New World, an extinct volcano, speaking of dead policies to ears unheeding; and Gustave Hervé the Toulouse professor, fiercest pacifist in Europe, afterwards its fiercest patriot, in a German railway carriage, his luggage a cake of soap and an unused toothbrush, is laying his weary head upon the broad bosom of a woman comrade, to fall asleep like a tired child; and Maxim Gorki, pallid, coming out from the Brotherhood Church of the New Southgate Road, in which, as in another ark, the Second Duma, fleeing across the European wastes, has found resting place for the soles of its feet, weary from the inextricable mind and everlasting talk of his countrymen—that serpent head, flattened, suggestive, contrasting with the delicate oval of the lady by his side—the actress who is his wife. And Emile Vandervelde, chairman of the International, minister of his country, is sawing the air with the gesture known to a hundred congresses; and there is the death's head of Plekanov, Marxian Torquemada, lost in the forests of dogma, and Anatole France, benevolently saturnine, unheralded and unknown in the insularity of the London Opera House, is asking, gently ironic, if he may be permitted to find the platform upon which he is to be the chief speaker; and

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Hyndman, with his cliff-like forehead cut off by its materialistic plateau, 'the Grand Old Man of Socialism.'

I am looking at them all.

And to think to-day that all these men and women, blind, leaders of the blind, scattered to the four quarters of the world to-day, their Red International a by-word, broken in policy, many of them enemies avowed—were held together by but two things, yet the strongest things in the world—love and hate: their hatred for capitalism and, something even deeper, their love for humanity.

It is because of that last that history will deal leniently with them, and, if it does not show the halo, it will at least show the thorns.

IV

HOW THE WORKING MAN THINKS

HE doesn't!

That would be the easiest and most obvious way of dealing with the title of this chapter. But it would not be the most accurate. It needs qualification.

The fact is that only a tiny percentage of human beings in any class are capable of conscious thought. The British working man is no exception. Yet he *has* his way of thinking, and to understand the British labour movement means the understanding of the British worker's psychology.

Here we are speaking of the broad mass of English working men, though something of what we say will also apply to the Celtic fringe, excepting the Irish part of it. For Ireland, in Labour, as in all else, has ever had her own channels of development.

The two chief leaders of the Irish Labour Party said to the writer in that much battered building, Liberty Hall, Dublin, in 1920: 'The British Labour Party does not understand us at all. Our labour movement is another kind of movement. We have another way of thinking.'

Jim Larkin, once Irish labour's uncrowned king, repeatedly voiced to the writer, when he was speaking with him from Irish Transport Workers'

platforms in 1913, the direct hostility of Irish Labour to the 'materialism' of the British Labour Party: 'as if we had no soul—only belly!' he said, with cold contempt in his steel blue eye.

The broad cleavage between the psychology of the British worker (using the word 'British' with the preceding qualification) and that of his continental brother, is that the British worker 'has no use for' abstract thinking. Abstractions irritate him. Partly because he himself is a simple, sentimental, good-natured fellow, swung by heart, who vaguely feels himself handicapped when first principles are being discussed. The intellectual process he ignores. The passing of resolutions, which he mistakes for 'action,' he understands. What he calls 'facts' he understands. Those things belong to the soothing syrup of 'practical politics,' a term which, always in his mouth, covers a multitude of sins and saves a lot of thinking.

So far as resolutions are concerned, I am prepared to say that the average trades unionist would cheerfully kill his grandmother by resolution and salve his conscience afterwards by the satisfying reflection that the resolution to do away with the old lady had been passed by 'an overwhelming majority!' My only doubts come from the reflection that he would probably stop at passing the resolution and then do nothing.

The abstract methods of thought of continental labour the British worker regards, when he thinks about them, as, just 'abstractions,' and it is to-day literally true to say that, despite half a century of Internationalism and international labour congresses,

the psychology of the French or German or Scandinavian worker, with their theories of Socialism and consciousness of aim, not to mention the American worker, is as much an enigma to-day, not only to the rank and file, but to most of the leaders of British labour, as it was when the First International was formed.

That is why the British Trades Unionist is still practically the only trades unionist in Europe who takes little real interest in Socialist theory, or, for that matter, in Socialism itself, as he is almost the only worker who does not call himself 'Socialist' or 'Social Democrat,' even when affiliated through the Labour Party to the Socialist International. He fears, hazily, such intellectual labelling. Labour on the continent, save the 'Yellow' unions of 'Christian Socialists,' etc., means Socialism. Here it means almost anything else. It can be proved by asking the first hundred workmen one meets if they are socialists, and if so, why?

Even when he goes on strike, he does so as water flows and grass grows, without conscious aim or method.

But it is only right to say that the British worker, when he is not a Welshman, is also an enigma to his continental or even to his American brother. One of the foreign delegates present at one of the bitterest discussions between miners' leaders and coal-owners in the 1921 strike negotiations, expressed his amazement at the fact that, after Mr Herbert Smith, President of the Miners' Federation, and an absolutely honest fighter for his class, had been snapping the heads off the

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

owners across the arbitration table, he responded genially and readily to one of the 'hated master-class,' when that gentleman called out to him as he was leaving the room: 'Come here, Herbert,' Mr Smith engaging in amiable and laughing conversation. 'But what does it all mean?' the intelligent foreigner asked in bewilderment. 'That sort of thing could only happen in England where nothing is as one expects.'

But the quality which redeems so many intellectual shortcomings in the make-up of the British worker is his sense of humour. Every Labour Congress can—and for this the gods be thanked!—at any moment become a circus. At a certain Labour Party congress, a speaker, portentous, boring, began one of his periods with: 'Speaking of Ireland as a whole . . .' Instantly the delegate of the Musicians' Union from his seat in the gallery sprang up to what he called 'a point of order and another injustice to Ireland:' 'Mr Chairman,' he said with terrific solemnity, 'who is it that dares to call Ireland "a hole"?'

There is nothing the British worker loves so much as amiable vagueness, unless it be its first cousin—compromise. He positively revels in his congresses as in his branch meetings in such terms as 'brotherhood,' 'love,' 'fraternal greetings,' etc., and his respect for the authority of 'the chair' is not inferior to his respect for his God. There is nothing he shies at more than theory, pluming himself upon being 'practical,' which is one reason why he abhors 'programmes,' and why even to-day the British Labour Party has no real

programme in the sense of national concentration upon certain goals and in spite of the Labour Party's 'New Social Order' policy of ambitious vagueness as adopted at the conference of June, 1918. In some of which there is, however, something of real good.

All this has its origin not only in the poverty of the British worker's intellectual equipment, but in part at least in that 'religious' spirit which one can say after experience of most of the European workers is peculiar to the Britisher and which, in a sense, really does justify Mr Ramsay MacDonald's use many years ago of the term 'British Socialism,' defining it as a special brand or 'school.' Many of us then hotly resented such labellings. Socialism was the same thing all the world over. We did not want 'tinned Socialism;' we wanted the international stew-pot. But we were wrong.

It is the religious spirit, referred to later, which often makes the average labour congress a sort of modified church service, but with a rigid ritual of its own, a ritual of negation rather than affirmation—of what you may not do rather than of what you may. For the labour congress, like the trade union branch meeting, has its ritual of 'good form,' as ruthless as that of Eton or Westminster, which is one reason perhaps why the average trades unionist when M.P. so quickly 'acquires the tone of the House.'

The reason, and the only reason why, apart from the propaganda itself, the gallant pioneers of British socialism, the old Social Democratic Federation failed in their appeal to the working man

was their complete lack of understanding of his psychology. Their propaganda broke upon three things—the Britisher's absolute simplicity, his 'religiousness,' and that sentimentality which prevents him ever getting to grips with unpleasant facts. The British workman is sentimental. He is not emotional—another quality altogether. The Frenchman, like the Irishman, is intensely emotional and entirely unsentimental. It is the difference between Marshal Foch and George Lansbury.

It was, I think, faithful Jack Williams, the one time famous leader of London's unemployed and a pioneer of the Social Democratic Federation, who told me that, in their innocence, he and his comrades, with whom, in 1886, he was tried for 'sedition and inciting to violence' at the historic Trafalgar Square meeting—John Burns, Harry Champion, and Henry Mayers Hyndman (all still alive), who with the other pioneer socialists could have been put into a four-wheeled cab, believed they had only to go out to the street corner with their appeal of 'scientific socialism' in order to convert the British workman without further ado. Their appeal was to be head, not heart. They had only to explain to their countrymen 'the gospel according to St Marx'—for it was upon the economic doctrine of Karl Marx, the gifted German Hebrew, with his 'materialist conception of history,' upon which the 'S.D.F.' pioneers founded the faith that was in them—who would at once see the beauties of 'surplus value,' 'exchange value,' and the other terms of the Marxian dogma.

For in those early days of Socialism the economic dogma had but replaced the priestly.

As a matter of record, it is doubtful whether the 'S.D.F.', in the ranks of which the writer worked for some years, ever had more than 20,000 on its membership roll and whether more than a few hundred working men at most ever knew what the socialist 'high-brows' were talking about. Perhaps they did not always know it themselves!

It was because the Independent Labour Party, formed in 1893, recognised these facts and made its appeal to the heart and not to the brain, in the first instance, that it met with almost immediate success, leading ultimately to the formation of the British Labour Party with its millions of to-day, and to 'independent labour representation' in the House of Commons.

All movements, whether in the mob or the man, have their inception in the heart, as any one who has worked in great movements knows. What is first felt in the furnace of the heart may afterwards be annealed in the tempering chamber of the brain, but that is a process which comes long after. This is true of all countries to a point, but especially true of England where, in the working man, heart dominates brain.

In all this there is a lesson for 'comrade Lenin,' who, despite his sometimes preternatural shrewdness, had up to recently almost the same ideas of the British worker's psychology that the Social Democratic Federation pioneers had of it. The Bolshevik or Communist propaganda is going ultimately to fail in this country just because of

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the facts given above, and it is just these facts which are the reason why in Russia itself Bolshevism has been forced to revert to 'State Capitalism.' The British worker is no revolutionist because he is sentimentalist. The sentimentalist instinctively hates 'direct action.' Celtic sections of him may sometimes talk revolution or even get to the point of acting revolution—but as a whole the British worker will reject Lenin's Marxian dogma just as he will reject Lenin's barricade. But he will do it because he *feels* not that way. Not because he *thinks* that way.

Given Trafalgar Square, a crowd of twenty thousand, and a band playing 'The Red Flag,' and the Anglo-Saxon trades unionist, his big heart filled to overflowing, will pass resolutions until Gabriel blows his trumpet, but the day the Revolution comes and the barricades go up in the Square, there will be nobody to man them.

It is the same qualities which make the British trades unionist the hero-worshipper of hero-worshippers. He must have somebody to worship. 'Tried, trusted and true,' that banal trinity of election posters, is still the idea behind the British trades unionist's devotion to leaders: that, and the fear of hurting a man's feelings by not re-electing him. Also, one other reason. It saves thinking.

That is why congress after congress he will return the 'old hands,' even after the 'old hands' have failed him again and again, and even after the rank and file who elect them have long since parted company with the policies of their leaders. 'Give

them another chance!’ It is so strong that even recent revolts against the decisions of the leaders in the industrial field, with the gradual domination of leaders by led, and save perhaps amongst the Welsh miners, have not prevented their re-election when it came to the question of what in the mind of the rebels was, ‘Getting on or getting out!’ It is the British workman’s sentimentality and good nature over again. It has cost him dear within the last ten years and it is going to cost him dearer.

It was the revolt against this worship of ‘dead men who don’t know they are dead,’ which, during the war, partly led to the Shop Stewards’ movement for workshop control and the men’s rejection of centralised administration, which has become a feature of our times, although a feature now not so militant as it has been, in all of which the worker has but stepped out of the frying pan into the fire. He has but exchanged stodgy bureaucracy for the anarchy of ‘go as you please,’ and because, still lacking self-control and self-developement, he has never learnt the *via media* of organisation with liberty, he is likely to swing back completely to his old mechanical policy of ‘follow my leader.’

But all this is only a minority movement, and even now the signs are not wanting of ‘reversion to type.’ The workman will soon get tired of his Bolshevik fling—a Highland fling where it has not been a Welsh reel—and outside Wales and parts of Scotland he is rapidly passing back under the control of the benevolent bureaucracy into which the labour movement is crystallising. His mentality does not essentially change, nor, despite

the great improvement in his physical conditions, has it vitally changed during the last decade.

In a word, despite the phrases by which he has always seduced himself, phrases of 'Internationalism,' 'international understanding,' 'brotherhood,' etc., and despite his resolutions interminable, the Labour leaders are faced with the fact to-day that the British worker is still, not violently, but quietly, surely, insular and national, fundamentally unchanged in the mass throughout the years. The Great War proved it to the hilt. And it will be proved once more when the next Great War comes. Nor does one think that it troubles them exceedingly.

Against this fact even the International gods fight in vain. And the gods of British labour are still national, not international—at their head Jehovah, not Marx.

Robert Blatchford once said to me in his hermetically sealed study at Herne Hill, whilst he puffed at his beloved calabash, that 'the thing that was troubling the factory girl was not either the downtrodden proletariat or the theory behind International Socialism, but what she was going to put into her stomach and what the Duke said to the Duchess in the conservatory after dinner.'

Which, in the mass, is also still true of the British working man.

V

THE LABOUR PARTY

THE British Labour Party, like a comet in the heavens and like the British Empire itself, seems to have grown unconsciously, in virtue of its own volition, none quite clear as to how it has come to fill the political firmament with the Red Light.

At the elections of 1906, when the membership of the Party was just under one million, and 29 Labour members were returned at the General Election out of 55 constituencies contested, it polled but a fraction of the votes of the electorate, polling 323,195 votes. Yet, during the last bye-elections, those of 1920 and 1921, Labour polled 201,000 votes as opposed to 226,000 polled by the powerful Coalition candidates and 86,000 by the Liberals, and, according to Mr Lloyd George, on these figures, it only needs a change of 4 per cent. in the voting to put Labour in a majority in the House of Commons, when assisted, as they would be, by their friends, the Independent Liberals. In the last General Election of 1918, Labour polled about half what the Coalition (government) candidates polled, obtaining the formidable total of 2,300,000 votes in the 361 constituencies fought.

In the next General Election Labour seeks to contest every seat in Great Britain.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Its rise to power has been meteoric. But comets sometimes have the property of flashing brightly for a space and then flashing out.

The original party sprang from 'the brain of British Labour,' the Independent Labour Party, in 1900. Its genesis was due primarily to 'the man in the cloth cap,' Keir Hardie, the Scots miner boy who drew his shorthand characters on his slate in the depths of the earth. Its original spirit was the spirit of the 'I.L.P.'

The Labour Party has not been transformed from a Federation of Trades Unions, Socialist parties, co-operative societies, trades councils, etc., into a national political party, open to the individual membership of all men and women agreeing with its aim, that is, the bringing of the Socialist State.

To-day, the Labour Movement as a whole, including the Trades Unionists as producers, the Co-operative Societies as consumers, and the Labour Party itself in politics, embraces within its membership an adult population of about ten millions. Taking the low estimate of two children for each adult, the Labour Movement represents about thirty millions of the forty-five millions of the United Kingdom.

The overwhelming majority of the four and a half millions of the Labour Party itself, which in the year 1919-20 has increased by no less than one million, are drawn from the Trade Unions, with their six-and-a-half millions of members, the rest consisting of the Independent Labour Party with some 60,000 members—the tiny tail which swings, or, rather, swung, those millions—

with, in addition, the intellectual hierarchy of which Mr Bernard Shaw is the high priest—the two thousand of the Fabian Society, that splendid propaganda body, both of these bodies, with one or two others, being affiliated to the Labour Party.

The mention of Bernard Shaw and his Fabians demands a slight digression, as the position of the 'intellectual' in the British Labour movement is of interest. To the average Trades Unionist a man like 'G. B. S.' is as phenomenal and inexplicable as a seraph. (It is this lack of understanding which perhaps is the only thing that to Mr Shaw himself is phenomenal and inexplicable!) At labour congresses the materialisation of 'G. B. S.' has invariably resulted in 'a frost,' as at that famous Portsmouth Labour Congress where the Irishman turned up to move 'the communisation of bread,' and where not a single delegate had the slightest idea of what he was advocating, much to Shaw's own puzzlement.

I remember once his speaking to a Labour audience at the Queen's Hall, and the giggle which greeted his appearance on the platform, as though some jester had appeared, and the place were a circus. And I remember his opening words, deeply, seriously meant, at which the audience roared with laughter, thinking he joked, and his serious, puzzled assertion: 'But I am in earnest.' And then from the back of the hall, the voice of a little Cockney trades unionist, scornful: 'When were you ever in earnest?'

British Labour has still no use for 'the intellectual,' whom it is apt to regard as 'a damn

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

nuisance,' not even for the I.L.P.er, who is indeed usually only very mildly intellectual.

Frankly, the Red Comet of Labour, like other comets grown gargantuan and globular at one and the same time, is getting impatient of its 'I.L.P.' tail, and the tail, reduced to a mere excrescence, hangs on desperately to the body from which, although it is sick of it, it mistakenly imagines it draws its life, whilst it is really the Labour Party which has drawn its life from the Independent Labour Party, and in more senses than one! I have not the slightest doubt that leaders like the Right Hon. Arthur Henderson, M.P., Mr Willie Adamson, M.P. (former chairman of the parliamentary Labour Party), and the Right Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P., would cheerfully see the I.L.P. in Hades because the I.L.P. has become a fury at the feast of Demos. It is always telling Demos what he ought to do and doesn't!

A gentleman who has been a chairman of the I.L.P. and who is to-day one of the most active and distinguished workers in the Labour Party said to me recently: 'Some of the labour leaders hate us. They would like to see the I.L.P. outside the Party.' Well, they will probably have their wish.

One of the leading officials of the Labour Party said to the writer a little while ago at the Party's headquarters: 'Some of us think the time has come for the I.L.P. to merge its identity in the big Party, because circumstances have changed and we have now become a national concern.' As this gentleman, an extremely able and honest official,

was originally one of the most passionate supporters of the I.L.P., his words carry special weight.

Looking backwards at the evolution of the Red Comet, one marks three stages. There was the stage of the nebula, of gestation, when it was beginning to take form in the womb of circumstance, when, as has already been seen, the apostles of independent labour, as their opponents might then have expressed it, 'went through the earth seeking whom they might devour.' That was the stage of great movements full of spiritual fire, full of fine enthusiasms, heroic self-sacrifice and dogged, plodding work done underground and out of the limelight.

Then came the middle stage when the new comet began to define itself out of the void of politics, by the return in 1906 of some 29 members to the House of Commons. We all remember that time when 'the Red Peril' had replaced 'the Yellow Peril' and when catering for the muggy mind of the Great British Public, hungry for sensation, the press became, first apoplectic, then, foaming at the mouth, epileptic. We were on the edge of revolution. Society was in the throes of dissolution. Property and religion were about to expire in a mist of blood and tears. It was the time of anti-Socialist societies, societies with all the disadvantages of a negative policy and big names. Society was scared. But then society has always been so easily scared.

There was that great meeting of some two thousand scared citizens in the hall of the Cannon Street Hotel, gathered in response to the clarion of

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the Middle Classes Defence League, the meeting, which was to set the anti-Socialist ball rolling against the new Labour Party, when I sat that 15th of March, 1906, my tail between my legs, listening to the platitudinous but painfully genuine fulminations of the City Fathers against the red peril. Like thousands of others, I had been a socialist for many years without having met a comrade or joined a movement. (I do not believe I knew even the name of a single socialist society.) And I can see myself, at that time a secretary of public companies, like thousands of other unknown men, moved by the new spirit, rising upon my trembling legs and in a sort of hair-spring voice asking permission to move an amendment in favour of Socialism to the anti-socialist resolution moved by the chairman. I can see the astonished stare and hear the hiss which turned the sleek-coated city gentlemen into an excellent imitation of a den of cobras as they discovered the enemy within the gate.

And then the refusal of 'things as they are' to be amended at any price by the whole of the hall to one vote—that of another solitary socialist who, greatly daring, had ventured into that fortress of class-consciousness.

And then the call which came to me from those comrades outside and the stormy years of propaganda that followed.

My case was that of thousands of others. Socialists and Labourites were finding one another in those strenuous days of the second stage. Deep was calling unto deep. And society seemed to be

forming up into 'reds' and 'anti-reds' for Armageddon.

Now we have reached the third, perhaps the last stage when the Comet, waxing, beginning to overspread the heavens, coming into its kingdom and tasting the power and the glory, seems assured of final victory. And yet, for those who have eyes to see, the signs are there to show that, as has happened to many comets before it, the Red Comet of organised democracy, as democracy, may be dissipated in a red mist between sunset and sunrise.

Not one of us in that yesterday of 1906 foresaw two things. First, that the Labour baby then tottering to its feet should one day shake the land with giant, fateful stride and the dead weight of its millions; and the other, which only a god or a drunken prophet could have foreseen, the fact that its very weight, resting upon faulty foundation, would be its undoing, leading to the third stage of to-day.

What are the outstanding phenomena of this third stage?

It is the machine-stage when labour, 'successful,' trusting to mass weight and shock-tactics, without direction, hurls itself, ox-like, first here, then there, upon the ranks of Capitalism. It strikes at times for any or for no reason. It strikes for privilege without responsibility, but, above all, it strikes for its belly. But, let it be also said, it sometimes strikes against unbearable wrong.

It is the stage when 'ca' canny,' or organised shirking, the thing that is the dry rot of modern labour, the thing that is eating out its morale to

render it some day an easy prey to its enemies, has been elevated into a sort of religion. The canonisation of 'ca' canny in our times and its justification as 'reprisals' against the shameful sweating and underpayment of the past is all part of the tyrant-machine which labour has developed, and it is the thing at which the labour leaders, themselves often secretly against it, have winked, finding that silence was the price of place. Some of them, including Mr J. H. Clynes, M.P., Mr J. H. Thomas, M.P., and Mr J. T. Brownlie, Chairman of the Engineers, as Mr Philip Snowden of the I.L.P., have with a rare courage made their protest against it—but what of the mass of the leaders, parliamentary and trade union? Even so intelligent a leader as Mr Robert Williams, blind to the fact that 'ca' canny' destroys the morale of the employee far more than it hurts the purse of the employer, describes the posters making this appeal by some of the labour leaders mentioned as 'the infamous "Gate to More" posters.'

Mr Philip Snowden, the acutest economist in the labour movement to-day, and a searchlight the brilliance of which is feared by the rushlights of labour leadership, has recently written in the columns of a labour paper: 'Production is the basis of the whole economic and financial system. It is the only source from which wages can be paid. Increased output may benefit the capitalists. It probably will; but without increased production the workers will go on riding the merry-go-round, and will get off where they started.'

And finally it is the stage when, as we see in

labour congress, in trade union branch, and in labour demonstration, majority-right has been exalted at the expense of minority-right, and, with it, the vote elevated into a sort of instrument of God. It is this deification of democracy which in our day has given the opportunity for the adroit wire-pulling of votes, which has led to the re-election of the same leaders year after year and to the strangling of certain unions by their 'old men of the sea,' who, molluscous, don't lead but just 'hang on.' It has resulted in the absolutely unthinking holding up of hands in the average trade union branch or labour congress and in the counting of noses rather than brains, and it has resulted in the blind mechanical swinging from one policy to another which we have seen in the last three years of strikes.

A miner's leader who had been one of Keir Hardie's stalwarts in his attack upon Merthyr Tydvil, said to me within the last year upon a lonely road of South Wales, the tears standing in his eyes: 'Our chaps swing from one side to the other like the beat of a pendulum, because they have become machines in the hands first of the direct actionists and then of the politicals. In the old days, we used to *think*. Now we *vote* instead.'

The Labour Party, in other words, in its third stage is becoming a voting machine. For we are well into the third stage, the stage which for Labour is fraught with fate. The stage when success has cemented bureaucracy into one solid, stolid mass, none the less bureaucracy because in

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

it, for the moment, the bureaucrat is not the leader but the led. When labour's omnipotence, as its weakness, the things which the war revealed for the first time, are drifting helplessly towards the paradise of the majority. When the flexible spirit of the movement has died as the machine developed, a machine feared not only by the foes outside but by the friends within the Party. Into that last stage of crystallisation—the stage of a benevolent bureaucracy, in the present stage so 'benevolent' that the bureaucrat or official only keeps his job by acquiescence with the majority of the moment.

He will not always acquiesce. To-day it is the rank and file of the Labour movement who form the bureaucratic machine, for that is what the Labour movement is rapidly becoming. But some day the officials will put the strangle-hold upon the rank and file as the rank and file are putting it on society. We shall then have reached 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' by a handful of officials, as in Russia, and through them the dictatorship of society—in other words, *autocracy*. It is the eternal circle.

Perhaps that is the inevitable end of all comets as of all successful movements, of all successful empires as of all 'successful' men. First struggle, then success, then stagnation. And finally, at the last, decay. Revolution—evolution—devolution. However that may be, it is assured that men do create machines which ultimately master the men who made them, as it is also assured that men, honourable men, will lie and indeed do everything short of murder, sometimes even that, to defend the

machine or system. The British Labour Party has reached that stage where the Machine has mastered the Man.

Here it is interesting to note how right capitalism was in this one thing. We socialists were always being warned, perhaps not always very intelligently or consciously, of the danger of the bureaucratic machine. Not one of us believed it. But the capitalists, though actuated by self-interest as was natural, were right.

I remember in those days having a rather excited and not altogether gentlemanly duel with Mr H. G. Wells in the columns of the *Clarion* upon this very point. With the easy facility of those days, I had ventured to say that the fear of the bureaucrat in the Labour State was all nonsense. When we did not like an official, we would 'fire' him as a lady would 'fire' a bad cook and elect another in his place. Mr Wells pointed out with some heat the danger of the evolving of a bureaucratic machine—I fear I had trodden rather roughly on the corns of omniscience—but pointed it out entirely accurately as the event has shown. Ultimately it took the editor, Robert Blatchford himself, incidentally entirely misunderstanding both the protagonists, a misunderstanding so characteristic of that early stage, when we were all trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, to pour oil upon troubled waters.

H. G. Wells, with that phenomenal imagination and instinct for the event, was right. I was wrong. But we were all wrong.

None of us saw the danger of the coming of

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the machine. To-day there are thousands in the Labour Party who see the danger but find themselves powerless to avert it. Within the last year or two hundreds of middle-class members of the Labour Party and still more working-class members have said this to the writer and others. The labour press, when independent, as the socialist congresses themselves, have been full of references, veiled or open, to the 'official' outlook which the Party leaders are developing.

Labour, like a second Frankenstein, has created a monster outside itself, a monster which may one day devour it.

But quite apart from the danger of the machine, the Party's essential differences of ideal, method and goal are evident.

Broadly speaking, the Labour Party consists of three sections. There is that small active Bolshevik minority standing for advance by physical force, insignificant in numbers itself, yet strong enough and active enough to swing the numberless malcontents who infect every trade union and socialist party, and, despite the Labour Party's resolution excluding the Communists, always at work under orders from Moscow to remain inside the party to split it, as Lenin himself says in his *Left Communism: an Infantile Disorder*. (We have already seen the 'official' Labour Party candidate opposed at a bye-election by a Bolshevik brother.) Then there is the intelligent, disgusted minority of the Independent Labour Party type, many of them middle-class men and women, who, though standing for advance by

50

parliament and the vote, yet are always at secret war with the stodginess of the leaders and the idealless policy of the party. Finally there is that third, inert body consisting of the indifferent millions of the trade unionists, the great mass of whom, and with some splendid and outstanding exceptions, are much more concerned with wages and work than with ideals. This is the great dead mass, part of which will in sheer inertia vote for the party election after election, and part of which, joining the party as it does purely from stomach reasons, will desert the party after it comes to power and when it finds that the New Jerusalem has not matured overnight.

If, however, none of the above weaknesses existed, and they apply largely not only to the British but to the world movement, the fatal lack of imagination of the older labour leaders would ensure, more effectively than any opposition, the final failure of any party of progress, as such, for the Labour Party may 'succeed' as a party of bureaucratic reaction, never as a party of progress. This lack of vision is shown in their eternal vacillation, just as it was shown at the beginning of the war when, if ever, vision and definite policy was needed, one way or the other. First, when at the great Trafalgar Square demonstration of August 2nd, 1914, a resolution was put forward and passed that 'Great Britain should rigidly decline to engage in war. . . .' But on August 29th, the National Executive of the Labour Party passed a resolution which surely, if passed at all, should have been passed on the 2nd August, in favour

of a parliamentary recruiting campaign for the army, the mass of the Labour movement joining in the campaign as will be remembered.

Such instances of vacillation arising from lack of imagination could be multiplied indefinitely.

Mr Ramsay Macdonald, himself a former chairman of the party in parliament, apparently recognising the lack of policy and vacillation arising from the visionless leaders, says in his book, *A Policy for the Labour Party*, that if parliamentary representation leads to the selection of men unequal to the task, 'the Independent Labour Party would again try its hand in gathering together an opinion and a mass to become the political custodians of the Great Industrial Co-operative State.'

The strength of a party is determined, not by numbers but by convictions. Let us see why the average working man votes for the Labour Party to-day.

He does so in nine cases out of ten, not because he is kept awake o' nights thinking about the undertrodden proletariat—he doesn't know what the word 'proletariat' means—or because he wants a new heaven on an old earth. He does so because he wants more money for less work. That is the brute fact.

When he goes on strike, he does so, in the mass, not out of 'sheer cussedness,' as is popularly supposed, and certainly not because he wants to bring either the revolution or the Socialist State, about which he knows nothing and cares less, as can be found out by questioning any average striker, but, again, because he wants more money

for less work. He strikes but too often, and always excepting the small idealist minority, not for conscious principle but for wages, not for soul but for body, as was recently practically admitted to the writer by the distinguished chairman of the Independent Labour Party, Mr 'Dick' Wallhead, a man of unique experience, as by many others.

And he strikes 'because the other fellows strike,' swayed by laws as obscure as those determining the migration of fish or the flight of birds. Behind any big strike in the beginning there are usually not more than a dozen men.

Which is not to say that in the ranks, and even amongst the leaders, there are not to be found men and women of deep, ardent conviction. But they are an almost infinitesimal minority.

Of course, the above facts are generally known to those leaders who still keep their heads out of the vote morass into which most of them have sunk.

The theory of the men who sat at the helm of labour in the old days used to be: 'First get the workman to vote for his belly, and afterwards he will vote for his soul.' It was the old theory of: 'Solve the poverty problem and you solve all spiritual and intellectual problems attaching.'

Only one would venture to ask: Is it sure that when the workman has filled his belly he will hunger for soul and brain food? Is it sure that when a Labour Party comes to power, as it certainly will before half a dozen elections have passed, the men who have joined it upon the 'More money—less work' principle, when they find

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

that the Labour as well as the Capitalist state has empty bellies, will continue to vote for it? And, finally: Do votes alone mean real power?

Then there is another little problem for consideration in the steady accession to the Labour ranks of distinguished ex-liberals such as Mr H. B. Lee-Smith, the Liberal member for Northampton; Sir Leo Chiozza Money, M.P., Mr Charles Roden Buxton, and Mr Noel Buxton, the Hon. Bertram Russell, the Hon. Arthur Ponsonby, and certain members of the Cadbury family, of cocoa fame.

Many or even all of these gentlemen are doubtless sincere Labourists and Socialists, but is it sure that *all* those other liberal 'sympathisers' who are flooding out the Labour Party have Socialism for their goal and wish to see the Red Flag one day over the House of Commons? Is it sure that *all* the other ex-liberals have joined the Labour Party because they are deeply concerned for the wrongs of Bill Smith, working man, or is it because the Liberal Party has become dissipated in space as in politic and the rising star of Labour seems to promise career? Is the Labour Party not in the situation of the young lady of Riga, who went for a ride on a tiger—in this case a Liberal tiger?

One ventures to ask these questions.

And soon, I have not the slightest doubt, we shall find Mr Asquith an enthusiastic labour member, as we should find Mr Lloyd George himself if he were twenty years younger and there had been no Coalition.

And one other question. If the Labour Party holds upon its present juggernaut of 'success' will it not ultimately lead to the whole party becoming 'liberalised' out of all knowledge from the original party, when the name will be the only thing of Labour left, just as the adoption of capitalism by the Bolshevist State in Russia has left it only the name 'Bolshevist?'

One is only asking.

But does not all this but show that between those early days of ardent faith and heroic self-sacrifice, those days of Keir Hardie's cloth cap in the House of Commons, and these days of the political machine with its seeking of votes and place, there is a great gulf fixed. It is the gulf which, to the smug but quite sincere self-satisfaction of the leaders of to-day means but the gulf between the destructive and the constructive, between criticism and achievement. But it is, in the growing consciousness of thousands of Labour adherents, defining itself as the gulf between Lazarus and Dives, between glorious struggle and soulless 'success,' between evolution and devolution.

But in remembering that, one does not forget that of evolution itself devolution is also part.

VI

LEADERS AND LED

HERE, it is interesting to consider the relationship of leaders and led in the Labour Party and to trace the process by which the leaders have become the led.

In the first wild fury of the democratic '80's, down to the end of the nineteenth century, the whole idea of the Socialist movement was to get rid of the bureaucratic leader, whatever shape he might assume. Then, after we had cut our milk teeth and discovered that leaders were as necessary as organisation, we put up with our leaders who, however, were very careful to keep the mailed fist inside the velvet glove. In fact, for many years, the art of 'leading without letting the other fellow know it' was developed in our congresses and branches to as high a pitch of perfection as that of any statesman of autocracy.

Gradually, as is the way with democratic, in common with all other humanity, having rid ourselves of what we called 'our false gods,' we set up others in their places, making our gods in the likeness of ourselves and worshipping them.

Marx was our first god. Then we developed quite a hierarchy, beginning with Keir Hardie, who, incidentally, had more god-like qualities than any who have preceded or followed him, but

who never sought to be treated other than as a good comrade. He himself once told me in a Belfast hotel after we had spoken at a Labour Party demonstration, that of all religions, his secret sympathies lay closest to Buddhism—and, as we know, one of the chief objects of the Buddhist thought is to get rid of all gods, although I doubt if Hardie himself, an essentially reverent man, realised this!

Each Socialist society had its own private Mahatmas. The Social Democratic Federation or 'S.D.F.,' had Mr H. M. Hyndman, a sort of Social-Democratic Jehovah. The Clarion Scouts, of which I was secretary for four years, and the *Clarion* cycling clubs had Robert Blatchford, who himself, simple determinist, hated the idea of gods or godship, and to prove it upon 'the other comrade,' once wrote upon the front page of the *Clarion* that famous article which bore the title: 'Concerning Mahatmas,' being a satire upon the Independent Labour Party's worship at the shrine of Keir Hardie. (This gentleman, with his colleagues upon the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P., had been called in derision 'the holy Socialist trinity.')

The divinity of these last was unquestioned, although I do not assert that they themselves sought it. At the Edinburgh I.L.P. conference in 1909, after 'the Big Four,' Messrs MacDonald, Snowden, Glasier, and Hardie, in one of those fits of the sulks which afflict political leaders at times when their followers see fit to disagree with them, had resigned from the executive, we were

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

treated to the edifying spectacle of seeing them begged, almost lachrymously, by Joe Burgess, one of the founders of the I.L.P., to return to the seats of the mighty and lead us into the Promised Land. They, at least, having resigned, had the dignity and the decency not to return.

It was at this conference that Mr Leonard Hall, himself a member of the executive, pointed out the danger of the idea which was gradually spreading abroad: 'that criticism was blasphemy, and that all elected persons were sacrosanct.'

The Trades Unions developed a very special assortment of godheadedness as the years went on.

Some of the rank and file of the unions swore by Ben Tillett, the man with the profile of a Greek god and of the adventures of Ulysses, some *at* him. John Burns, at the time the writer came into the movement, had retired into the holy of holies of cabinet ministership and Clapham Common and was being cursed by bell, book, and candle by the high-priests of Marxianism. (This gentleman's searching analysis of some of his old comrades who have managed to dodge 'the Man with the Scythe,' given recently to the writer in his book-fastness on the Common, might give the ungodly occasion to scoff, and so will not be repeated!). Every now and then a strange god would arise, gather around him a band of the faithful, preach the one true faith and disappear into the infinite. (We once had a gentleman of this type, who fell upon us out of the circumambient, a man with long hair, sandals, and gabardine, a follower of Epictetus

58

and simple lifer, who, like so many others, turned out to be just a simple loafer.)

Victor Grayson, the *enfant terrible* of the movement, at one time, and certainly without asking it, for Grayson was modest, seemed irresistibly to be drawing to himself the adoration of the discontented elements inside the Labour Party which were already showing themselves at the time of his return for Colne Valley in 1907—the first man, and apparently the last, to be returned as a pure ‘Socialist’ for a British constituency. Some of us still remember one of his admirers, an enthusiastic young High Church curate with an Adam’s apple which in his more excited periods moved up and down like a shuttle, who at times seemed to confuse Grayson with the gods of his church, and from whom Grayson, upon his approach, was wont to hide himself under the nearest table.

The orthodox labour leaders, as always, quietly unimaginative, even did their best to provide him with a cross by laughing him to scorn, at first refusing to officially endorse his candidature for Colne Valley—but Grayson was not made for crosses, and so he, too, also in the long run vanished from the ken of ‘the divinely discontented’ and to the great content of the orthodox who only wanted to be left alone.

But looking backwards, it is curious to note how nearly all the great figures of the movement came from the little army of the Independent Labour Party. None of the men who came after, the men who to-day are the nominal leaders of labour, have ever won the affection and enthusiasm

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

that the earlier I.L.P.'ers won. The I.L.P. was then the brain of labour. To-day it is the tail.

For many years and even down to the war, many of these leaders were autocrats in all but name; and it must be said for them that, not only were they absolutely sincere as any other autocrats that their reign was necessary for the good of the rank and file, but that they ruled as uncrowned kings over most submissive and obedient subjects. They developed a tactic that was masterly, reducing the running of congresses to a fine art, riding the rank and file on a loose rein, letting the animal think it was having its own way and choosing its own road, whilst adroitly guiding it inflexibly to the goal of its riders.

I remember at the Leicester Labour Party Congress in 1911 seeing a typical example of this sway of mind over matter, or, to put it more accurately, the sway of the professional over the amateur. It is, I think, fair to say that the majority of delegates to that congress were convinced of the equity of 'proportional representation' and would have voted for it. Then, Mr Ramsay MacDonald, a consummate artist in the technique of public meeting, rose to speak against it. Within a short time he had completely swung the congress to his way of thinking, and proportional representation was lost on a card vote by 1,255,000 to 97,000 votes.

MacDonald, one of the best hated and most admired men in the Socialist movement, has always been one of its intellectual gods, of an entirely different type to Hyndman, the intellectual divinity

of the Social Democratic Federation, for between these two men love's labour was certainly lost. A sincere man, despite his critics and his reputation for intrigue, a reputation derived from an extraordinary capacity for self-hypnosis and a Scots belief in compromise, gifted with exceptional force of character and a certain personal magnetism, but lacking perhaps in the human quality which draws affection, MacDonald, despite his host of enemies, will yet make labour history, and will possibly be the first Labour Premier, as he undoubtedly means and has always meant to be.

From time to time, men arose both in the socialist parties themselves as in the Labour movement of which they were part, to challenge this rule of the leaders and the 'policy-less policy' of the Party, all of them either to be absorbed or smashed by the official machine, known in the movement as 'the caucus.' Ben Tillett challenged the caucus. Jim Larkin challenged it. Victor Grayson did also.

Where are those three challengers to-day? The first has been taken into the machine, or, at least, his voice is no longer heard above the grinding of the wheels. The second is in jail in a foreign land, a red Ishmael, his hand against every man, every man's hand against him. Victor Grayson is no longer in the movement.

The Social Democratic Federation, afterwards the British Socialist Party, as a movement challenged the labour leaders and their machine, only ultimately to be absorbed by the monster. Even after it entered the party maw, the B.S.P. carried on its *intransigent* tactics. But where is the British

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Socialist Party to-day? It has been driven from the Labour Party and has now been swallowed by the Communist Party, which apparently can digest anything, except Lenin.

Much of which will of course be fiercely denied by the officials themselves and as fiercely endorsed by their opponents.

It must not be assumed that none of the leaders inside the Labour Party executive protested against the development of the caucus as against that deification of the leader which was so often the deification of the duffer. Men like Keir Hardie, dragged at the tail of circumstance, resented secretly and even fiercely the new developments in the party.

One fine summer's evening—I think it was about the time when Mr Ramsay MacDonald, then chairman of the parliamentary party, was leading his *moutons enragés* through the division lobbies of the House—I was standing in a doorway in Victoria Street and saw a procession of labour members being led to the House to vote in some division or other. At the tail came Keir Hardie, looking, to use a popular phrase, and not in any invidious sense, for the writer has always admired him, 'like a sick monkey.' The whole story of his being dragged from the propaganda platform, which he should never have left, to become a cog in a voting machine, and of his disillusionment with the party, was told in his air and bearing. He looked a sad and sorry man, heartily ashamed of the whole business, unprotestant because he feared to split the party.

It was the thing which I met in one of the chief

paid officials of the Labour Party in London, a year or two after it had been returned in 1906 'to paint Westminster red,' a man to whom in the innocence of my heart, recalling the time when he had been a fervent co-worker with me upon the executive of one of the propaganda bodies, I had been expanding upon the ideals of the Labour Party and the chances the Labour members would now have to translate them into realities.

He looked at me a moment, opened his lips as though to speak, and smiled a little pitying smile. It struck me dumb. It was so obviously the smile of a completely disillusioned man, as indeed I gathered from his next words.

Already, even at this stage, the leaders were getting the taste of power in the mouth and were finding it sweet. And with it all, they were, many of them, so unconscionably prim and self-satisfied.

I recollect having a conversation about this time with Mr Arthur Henderson at the then headquarters of the Party in Victoria Street and can remember realising, vaguely, in growing apprehension, how perfectly self-satisfied the leaders were becoming and how perfectly impossible it already was to open their eyes to the dangers ahead. Even Arthur Henderson, an honest, well-meaning, and modest man, was quite obviously of the belief that the Labour Party was the best possible in the best of all possible worlds. It was rather like interviewing His Holiness the Pope.

The psychology of all this is not difficult to understand. No doubt dozens of labour leaders, even to-day, as their followers, sometimes have

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

flashes of intuition to warn them of the tremendous machine by which, having created it, they are being ingested and of its dangers. But, because such flashes are inconvenient, and because, if they dared to think, the whole machine would tumble about their ears and they would lose their positions, they deliberately keep their eyes closed. Dazzled as they are by the piling up of votes, by every apparent sign of prosperity and success, warnings come to them as something ridiculous—and so they are forced to run forward just as a man on a tight rope is forced to run or fall. They dare not think. They do not think. But some day they will have to think.

One of the marks of the degradation to which organised labour has fallen from its high estate is shown by the blatant justification of 'machine-politics' by the modern labour leader, a justification made often with the cleanest possible conscience.

A former respected leader, who some years ago made a remarkable fight for labour in a southern constituency, frankly said to the writer the other day: 'Of course Labour must develop its machine. We shall never be able to make conscious Socialists of more than a small minority, and what we have to do is to reach the point where the average man votes 'red' just as his father voted for the party colours of Liberal or Tory, without knowing very much of what he is voting for.' The secretary of one of the organisations affiliated to the Labour Party who was present, and like his friend, honest and intelligent, confirmed the other's remarks, adding, with that paralysing *sang-froid* of the

labour leader, with its utter unconsciousness of anything higher than votes and power: 'That is the only way to get our men into parliament.'

But it will be said that all this has changed to-day. The outstanding phenomenon of our time since the war has been the throwing over of leaders by the rank and file and even, as we have seen in the 1921 Miners' Strike, their fierce denunciation. Repeatedly, during and since the war, we have seen the decisions of the leaders set at naught by their followers. We have seen the Shop Stewards' movement aimed directly against centralised control, and we have seen the 'lightning strike' without consultation with leaders or directly in the teeth of their advice.

During the 1921 Miners' Strike we have seen fiery meetings, especially in South Wales, denouncing leaders, who have been called 'traitors,' and with it searching criticism of men like Mr Frank Hodges, the secretary of the Miners' Federation, in this case, at least, a criticism entirely undeserved. We have seen the labour leaders attacked front, flank, and rear, in press and on platform, by both bolshevist and orthodox trades unionist. Congresses, in their criticisms of the leaders, have shown a tendency to boorishness if not to downright bearishness. And at the Southport Congress of the Independent Labour Party we have recently seen 97 delegates, with their branches, break away from the leading strings.

All this is, however, but a temporary phenomenon, as will be seen when we come to consider the psychology of Demos under the stress of the Great War.

VII

THE WAR AND DEMOS

THE revolt against the leaders can be explained by the new psychology of the labour movement which the war developed and from the results of which it has not yet recovered. This development can be traced step by step.

Up to the time of the war, Demos was still an easy-going sort of fellow, still prepared to do an honest day's work for what was sometimes a dishonest day's wage, who struck not 'for the fun of the thing,' but more or less out of reasoned purpose.

But the war changed all that. In no field has it made such fundamental change as in that of democracy.

Up to the outbreak of war, the British Labour movement had the comfortable theory—it has always had comfortable theories—a theory carefully fostered by the leaders, that man was essentially a reasonable animal and that Labour would come to its own (incidentally, it was never clear as to what was 'its own' or to what it was coming) peacefully, step by step through the vote and peaceful persuasion. Nor have I the slightest doubt that the most uncomfortable body of men in England, had some chance stroke flung labour into power, would have been the labour leaders

66

themselves. It was so delightful to go to congresses (we used to call them 'junketings') and to speak in Trafalgar Square and pass resolutions and denounce and criticise. But, and the agendas and debates of the pre-war Labour congresses will prove the statement to the hilt, what we were to do when we got to power we scarcely troubled to visualise. We were much too 'practical.'

Another comfortable pre-war theory of the leaders was that there would never be a world-war and that when it came (for we were delightfully muddled both in phraseology and thinking), somehow or other the working man would refuse to shoot his brother. We weren't quite clear as to why he would not shoot him. But there it was.

All this, despite the passing of anti-war resolutions from 'the fraternal greetings to our foreign comrades' type and the vague generalisations with which our congresses, both national and international, bristled, down to the definite, militant 'War against War' of Keir Hardie's International General Strike resolution against war which I heard him move at the Copenhagen International Socialist Congress in 1910. That of course was much too definite for the leaders, and so Hardie was compelled to withdraw it for further consideration by the movement before the Vienna Internationalist Congress to be held in 1914, which never came, for by then socialist was cheerfully killing socialist in the trenches.

Then came the war and knocked our theories into a cocked hat, and for the first time shook the faith of the working man in the infallibility of his

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

leaders, who were now being regarded as false prophets, not so much consciously as sub-consciously—and the working man, like all human beings, is dominated by his sub-conscious mind rather than by his conscious. Men, even working men, were actually driving their bayonets into their brothers not only with a prayer on their lips but with the scientific 'twist in the guts,' and were doing it *con amore*. The leaders were astonished.

You see, our leaders had never been clear about country and patriotism. We were never very clear about anything. We did not say we were for or against country—we simply sidestepped it. We hated facing facts. Perhaps it was not only a class but a national characteristic.

The chaos of our leaders' minds was shown not only by the contradictory labour resolutions for and against participation in the war which throughout the country were passed at its outbreak, but by their failure to grasp the problems which would inevitably follow on the heels of war for the rising democracy, a failure which left them at its conclusion comparatively helpless.

The shock to our preconceptions caused by the war jarred the Labour movement to its heels and, after shaking our faith in our leaders, made way for that irritation against them and for the spirit of anarchy which for the first time entered the movement, and for that mutual recrimination between leader and led which marked the congresses of labour, all this being helped by the success of the Russian Revolution.

It must not be forgotten that Demos, the baby,

never realised his strength until the war, forgetting that only the peculiar and artificial circumstances of war, when man-power both for killing and feeding was needed at all costs, gave him, now, the whip hand. Having been taught by his leaders that the ends of existence were primarily material ends, or, rather, never having been taught that they were something other, and getting blood on his teeth, he began to demand not only the blood of the capitalist but of the country—not always the same thing. Each demand granted by those who sat in the high places at Westminster but served to whet the appetite of the labour baby, who, like one of Mr H. G. Wells's 'boom-food' babies, waxed fat and kicked.

To give Demos his due, however, he was not only developing tigerish but heroic qualities, enduring without complaint and giving his life upon the sodden fields of France, in order, as he at least then believed, 'to make the world safe for democracy.' For Demos, like his master, is neither black nor white, but gray.

But the imagination of certain men of the baser sort getting to work and comparing the enormous advances in nominal wages in a handspan of years as opposed to those in the plodding years of parliament which preceded it, they put it to Demos that advance by the vote, like the leader who had advocated it, was ridiculous. 'Look at what you get by the threat of direct action and damn your leaders!' they said. And as victory followed victory, Pyrrhic victories as Labour is to-day discovering, Demos turned more and more to the

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

two-edged sword of direct action and the strike—that sword which cuts not only the man against whom it is wielded but the wielder himself.

The leaders, astonished, dismayed, finding that neither manipulation nor threat availed, took the only course possible to such men—they went with the tide—and they are still going with the tide. They dared not swim against the new current, and perhaps all this was natural. After all, they were only human—and they were ‘politicians.’ But the fact remains.

An interesting example of the chameleon-like capacity for quick-change upon the part of the labour leader, when the rank and file give the word, was shown in the famous Council of Action formed by Labour in 1920 to oppose any war with Soviet Russia, which Council called for any and every means, even including a general strike, to prevent such a war. We were then amazed by the spectacle of Labour’s leading anti-direct actionists, men who had always fought the idea of force, laying hand on heart and declaring their adhesion to the force principle.

The net result is that of recent years the leaders have become the led. Holding their places as they do at the mercy of the votes of their followers, can one wonder that, politicians as they are, they live votes and seek votes and dream votes. Almost insensibly and with conscience complete they have come to regard the labour movement as a preserve in which the plums of office are the reward of gauging correctly the feeling of the men with the votes, nor are they alone in this.

What the average man forgets is that when a leader goes to meet the employer at the arbitration table, he is not a brain but a mouthpiece. He is a 'walking delegate.' If he doesn't do what he is told he may be 'fired.' And so, ultimately, the leader of democracy finds himself in exactly the same position as some modern monarchs, he finds that the price of the job is popularity and going with the tide.

But all this has meant the coming of a new spirit into the labour movement—'the spirit of the loaves and fishes.'

The new outlook of the labour leader was forcibly illustrated in a case which recently came under my own notice which helps to explain that vein of scepticism almost invariably displayed by the modern journalist, so often a labour sympathiser, when speaking of the labour leaders of to-day.

The London editor of a provincial newspaper group was asked by his principals to obtain an article from a certain very prominent labour leader and M.P., giving his views upon a matter then engaging public attention. The leader's first question was very properly: 'How much?' He was informed that £5 a column was the usual payment, it being pointed out that the article would help his union considerably. 'Not enough,' he said. Although admitting its importance to his union, he refused to write the article for less than £10 a column, which was finally agreed.

The London editor then approached another well-known labour leader—a former 'All-Red,' who has made British labour history—for his

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

views, he also asking: 'How much?' Being informed that the first leader had agreed to do it for £10 a column, he replied, 'No fear! Not enough. I have a ruddy soul to sell!'

Such a case is of course quite exceptional. But that it should be possible, is eloquent of the new outlook, and it is from such men that those who 'sell out' of the Labour movement are recruited—that is, go over to well-paid posts in the ranks of Labour's opponents, the term being invented for them.

The labour leader, whether trades unionist or member of parliament, with a few noble exceptions, and especially since the war, which has brought the leaders 'to heel,' is first and foremost 'out to keep his job,' a fact fully recognised even by the denseness of the rank and file, who, like the tyrant children they are, play upon it by jibbing at advice and insisting upon unthinking obedience. At every congress of labour, the exchange and barter of jobs is perfectly understood, nor will any single leader have the courage or the audacity to deny it. The different unions say to one another: 'We'll vote for your man if you'll vote for ours,' the practice being characterised some time ago by the *Labour Leader* itself, a warm advocate of the Labour Party, as 'a crying scandal.'

It is perfectly well known and has as freely been expressed for the last ten years, that the reason of the trades union jealousy and internecine warfare which exists, as the failure hitherto to secure 'the unification of the unions,' is due to job-hunting and the fear by the officials that

centralisation of control would lead to fewer jobs. The Achilles heel of trades unionism is that no official is going to yield his job save with life itself.

Mr Frank Hodges, the Secretary of the Miners' Federation, at the Labour Party Congress held at Brighton in 1921, placed it on record that 'they had tried to penetrate deeper down into the strength and the weakness of the industrial movement as a whole, and the conclusion they had drawn was that industrially the trade union movement was for the most part, unhappily, a mere grouping of close corporations with only the interest of the particular group at stake and at heart, *and as the British industrial movement developed they found that tendency more and more marked.*'

It was at the same congress that Mr T. F. Richards, a prominent Trade Union official and a lifelong worker for Labour, mercilessly analysed the trade unions by saying that they had been pompous, bombastic, obsessed with their importance and prosperity, and that they were now faced with bankruptcy and utterly impotent.

How far democracy itself, and particularly since the war, has become plutocracy and how far, even in the trades unions themselves, the big fish eat the little, was shown by a speech of Mr Dan Irving, the Labour Party M.P. for Burnley, in a House of Commons debate of this year, in which he said:—

'Many a man who has spent his life in public service in a constituency and is in every way a fit candidate to represent the constituency, is to-day

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

being turned down because he belongs to no great Union, and because other members and officials of Unions, which have money behind them, secure the nomination of their Union. Even to-day, therefore, there is a narrowing of the field from which candidates can be drawn, and wealth, even in the working-class movement, counts for a great deal in the selection of a candidate—probably even more, in many instances, than capacity and proved service.'

It may here be said that quotations similar to the above given in this book could be multiplied *ad nauseam*. All these things are known both to leaders and led—it is only place-hunting and political cowardice which prevents them being dragged into the light of day.

But if the rank and file imagine that the leaders have changed, or, for the matter of that, that they themselves have changed in such matters, however much the war seems to have introduced a new relationship, they are making a natural but fatal mistake. The modern labour leader, usually more or less sincere, in a 'vague, amiable way, often anxious for the welfare of his class, has more than ever since the war, which gave to him the sweets of high government office, developed from the propagandist into the politician. He is out for 'career.' He is, as has been shown, determined not to be led longer than is absolutely necessary. And it is not difficult for those inside the movement to-day to see that the rank and file are once more gradually falling into line under the word of

command of the drill sergeant. The process is slow—but it is there.

The fact is that the majority of the leaders to-day are imitating some of the worst points of some of their political adversaries. They have not only become 'respectable,' loving the insignia of respectability, but, what is worse, they are beginning to play the game of politics in the old, bad way. And they are playing against men who, masters at the game, with centuries of training and tradition, will always be able to beat them.

The editor of a London conservative daily said to me some time ago: 'Labour's opponents believe they will always be able to sidetrack labour, and they believe it with full justification, having regard to labour's record. So many of the labour leaders are out for themselves. And they lack imagination and enthusiasm. Few of them can resist a job, still fewer, flattery. If they become troublesome, they can always be "kicked upstairs" into office.'

That may be true of some of the leaders to-day. But it is not true of all. Nor will it always be true.

But what is true, and what in sorrowful retrospect is known to even the humblest member of Labour's rank and file, is that when the war was over, the Labour leaders had the ball at their feet. The world was sick of war, its old illusions broken, and was turning with eager, longing eyes to democracy to save it from itself. Even the man in the street, for all his lack of knowledge of labour, as is generally admitted, had, after the war, turned almost unconsciously towards the rising democracy for the

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

salvation of society. The Labour leaders knew this, and it is to their lasting shame that instead of leading humanity along new paths towards new goals, even at the risk of a temporary political set-back, they, with few exceptions, placed position and party before principle, treading the smooth, well-worn road that leads to office and preferment.

And so wide and deep is the recognition of all this, that I have no hesitation in saying that scarcely a single leader of the Independent Labour Party section of the national Labour Party will deny it; and that there are even leaders sitting in Westminster and upon the Trades Union executives who have thought the same thing deep in their hearts, and who, poor fellows! would give everything, except career, to say what they think, but cannot, hobbled as they are to the chariot of party.

But the Labour leaders still continue to play the game of politics and job-hunting, still are quietly determined to regain their lost power over their followers, and still persist with their preposterous phrases of 'liberty' and 'democracy;' and so they will persist until the new democracy that is forming has found them out and abandoned them.

VIII

THE BIRTH OF A PARTY

IF there had never been any I.L.P. there would never have been any Labour Party.

Up to 1893, when the I.L.P., or Independent Labour Party, was formed, the British working man had no more idea of independent representation in parliament *as* working man than has the American workman of to-day. Up to the advent of the I.L.P., the British working man regarded the Liberal or Tory M.P. as his natural interpreter in the national councils.

It was the Independent Labour Party which sounded the trumpet call for Labour independence of both the historic parties. Its evolution is here of vital interest.

After the Chartist Movement had collapsed in the late '40's, the working-class movement seemed to have received its death-blow. But the Reform Act of 1868 enfranchised the workmen in the boroughs and in the same year the first Trades Union Congress was held at Manchester. The first coming of the idea of 'independent labour representation' was at the second Trades Union Congress, held the following year in Birmingham, when a paper was read on 'Direct Labour Representation in Parliament,' and about this time a Labour Representation League was formed for returning

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Trades Unionist members to the House of Commons.

The League failed to get its candidates recognised by either the Liberal or Tory parties, being forced into three-cornered contests, and it was not until the General Election of 1874 that the League secured the return of two men, Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, out of 14 candidates, of whom only four, including the two returned, were allowed a straight fight as Labour candidates. In the 1885 election, 11 Labour members were returned to the House of Commons, without, however, acting as a separate group.

It was about this time that the 'socialist spur' first got to work, the year 1881 seeing the formation of the Democratic Federation, and, with it the beginning of that tendency to splitting which the Socialist movement had taken over from its precursors, the Churches. For the new organisation soon split into the Socialist League, headed by William Morris, the poet, and the Social Democratic Federation, headed by H. M. Hyndman.

The tendency to sectionalism and to fatuous belief in words in the Socialist movement as in the Labour movement of which it is a part, is excellently illustrated by this last organisation, which became the Social Democratic Party, which changed its name to the British Socialist Party, this B.S.P. splitting during the war into two parts, one part calling itself the National Socialist Party, which, incidentally, has now once more taken on the original name of the Social Democratic Federation, under their old leader, Hyndman—and so the sectarian

circle completes itself. It is, by the way, most interesting to note the longevity of the Socialist propagandist, many of the pioneers of fifty years ago being still alive and kicking . . . usually one another!

It cannot, however, too strongly be emphasised that to the pioneering of the Democratic Federation and its self-sacrificing leaders, the Socialist awakening of Great Britain is alone due.

The Labour Representation League disappeared, and at the 1886 Trades Union Congress an Electoral Labour Committee to unite Labour opinion throughout the country in favour of independent labour representation was formed, but, like so many labour men and organisations to come afterwards, it got tangled up with Liberalism—'Lib-Labism,' as the Liberal-Labour mixture ultimately came to be known—in other words, it was 'nobbled' by the Liberals, exactly as the modern Labour Party is beginning to be, if not 'nobbled,' then diluted. For at this time the Labour infant showed a tendency to those political rickets which have now become chronic.

It was Keir Hardie who gave the first clarion call to independent labour representation in a definite sense. This was at the Swansea Trades Union Congress of 1887, when, as representative of the Ayrshire miners, he enunciated in his first Trades Union Congress speech the demand for the political independence of Labour. In 1888, Hardie stood as Independent Labour candidate for Mid-Lanark. He was offered £300 a year, a safe Liberal seat, and the payment of his election

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

expenses if he would withdraw. But this Chevalier Bayard of Labour, *sans peur et sans reproche*, refused to be bought, just as in the long afterwards he refused for himself a life annuity which two old ladies, greatly admiring, offered him. The Socialist and Labour movement has been rich in such men.

He was defeated heavily, but out of this experience the Scottish Labour Party was formed, with Keir Hardie as Secretary.

In 1893, some fifty local working-class organisations met together with delegates from Socialist and industrial bodies, these delegates including John Burns and J. Havelock Wilson (both still alive), and under Hardie's chairmanship, Hardie having been returned for South-West Ham at the General Election of 1892, formed the Independent Labour Party.

The next five years saw the I.L.P. carry the fiery cross through the highways and byways of Britain, and in 1895 twenty-eight I.L.P. candidates went to the polls, all being defeated, even Keir Hardie losing his seat. Yet it was in this moment of defeat when perhaps the Labour movement, all unknowing, reached its highest point of courage and enthusiasm. Parties, like nations, often mistake nadir for zenith, imagining that mere numbers and 'success' mean the latter, whereas they more often mean the former.

A broader movement was believed to be necessary, and in 1899 a resolution was carried at the Plymouth Trades Union Congress, by 546 to 434 votes, in favour of convening a Special Congress

‘for securing an increased number of Labour Members in the next Parliament.’

This Special Congress was held at the Memorial Hall, London, on February 27, 1900, 129 delegates representing over half a million members being present, these delegates representing the Trades Unions, the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society, a party constitution being drafted, and a Labour Representation Committee, or, in other words, a Parliamentary Labour Party being formed.

In 1902 Philip Snowden contested Wakefield unsuccessfully, but D. J. Shackleton was returned for Clitheroe. In 1903 Will Crooks won Woolwich and Arthur Henderson Barnard Castle, unsuccessful bye-elections being fought by John Hodge at Preston and G. H. Roberts at Norwich.

Here it is interesting to see what has happened to these pioneers of the I.L.P. and Labour Party, as it throws an interesting sidelight upon the Labour Party of to-day.

Keir Hardie, his health undermined, died of a broken heart in 1916 at seeing the work of a lifetime crumble under him when the workers of Europe went into the trenches to kill. Mr John Burns, now the Right Hon. John Burns, became perhaps the man most hated of his former socialist comrades, when he took office in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal Government in 1905, the forerunner of many others. For Mr Havelock Wilson, the Secretary of the Sailor's and Fireman's Union, and the part he played during the war have been reserved by many of his

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Labour comrades the fiercest denunciations. Mr D. J. Shackleton has become Sir David Shackleton and, becoming a Labour adviser to the government, for which post he receives £3000 a year, has ceased to take active part in Labour politics. Mr Will Crooks, 'the great Cockney,' a much loved and very human man, and who, with Hardie, of those mentioned, alone has gone to the Great Beyond, found himself at loggerheads with his old comrades at the time when, taking a bellicose line upon the war, he asked the permission of the Speaker to start the singing of 'God Save the King,' in the House, whilst Mr John Hodge and Mr G. H. Roberts, both, like Mr Arthur Henderson and Mr George Barnes, now 'Right Honourables,' and, with the approval of the party, ex-members of capitalist governments, have at various times caused much heart burning amongst some of their old labour friends.

One of the most prominent industrial leaders has written a book upon this period in which he speaks of 'the treason of political association with the Liberal and Conservative parties,' and, speaking of the leaders who took office, says they 'had either sold themselves or handed themselves over gratuitously to the militarist rulers. . . .' Here, again, is one of those questions of policy which irretrievably divide modern labour.

Alone, amongst those mentioned, Mr Philip Snowden still keeps the red flag flying, but, as one would venture to think, like many of the other I.L.P. leaders, profoundly uncomfortable and distressed in the later phases of the Labour

movement which he has done so much to build up.

It is curious to reflect upon the composition of a certain cricket XI., consisting largely of Labour leaders, which the writer captained in 1906. John Hodge—a redoubtable bowler and afterwards Minister of Pensions (we had two or three future Ministers in that team, or as spectators, if memory serves), and to remember that to-day nearly all of these men, then close comrades, have become so divorced from one another and from the crusading spirit of the Labour movement at that time that no power on earth could bring them together either upon the cricket or any other field!

The Newcastle-on-Tyne third annual Labour Representation Committee Conference of 1903 threw out the first direct challenge to the other parties when it passed a resolution demanding that 'the members of the Executive Committee should strictly abstain from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties. . . .' For it must be remembered that in those early days of Labour, large numbers of Labour M.P.s and trade union leaders were still what were called 'half-baked,' and much inclined to hob-nob with their old radical connections. The Labour infant was still rickety, but his bones were hardening.

The years 1903, 1904, and 1905 saw the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Representation Committee with which it was

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

affiliated, carrying on a tearing propaganda throughout the country, with the result that at the General Election of 1906, 29 of the 50 candidates run as Labour candidates were returned to the House of Commons, forming for the first time a separate Labour Group in parliament, the name of the organisation being changed to that of 'The Labour Party,' which has grown into the formidable organisation we know to-day.

IX

'THE BRAIN OF LABOUR'

IN all movements, and more especially in all democratic movements, it is a handful of men and women who steer and inspire. Democracy itself is always steered by autocracy. This is also true of the Labour Party, which right from 1893 to 1906 was inspired and steered by the handful of I.L.P'ers—fifty or sixty thousand as they ultimately became. The decline of the Labour Party in ideal, morale, and enthusiasm, very definitely dates from the return of the 29 Labour men to parliament in the latter year.

It would seem to be inevitable natural law that the climb to power and success, whether of man or movement, is marked by the shedding of ideals and inspiration. We see it in the successful politician, for whom the French have the inimitable word '*arriviste*,' or 'one who has arrived,' and we see it in the successful party. Both men and parties camouflage the fact and anæsthetise their consciences by the use of smooth phrases. They say that power means responsibility and responsibility means conservatism. 'Inspiration,' in this terminology of 'success,' becomes 'hot-headedness.' 'Idealism,' 'irresponsibility.'

When we of the I.L.P. in 1906, with beating hearts, saw the little band of 29 stalwarts take

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

their seats on the green benches, we, like the awakening democracy which had sent them there, expected certain definite things.

First, we expected 'the best platform in Europe,' as is the British House of Commons, to be used in season and out of season. Instead, we found a disinclination to use it and instead an inclination 'to get the tone of the House.' We expected, naïvely enough, that our M.P.s would regard themselves not only as leaders and inspirers but as the interpreters of the movement behind them and the mouthpieces of the dumb masses, and that in the political arena they would set up new standards of unselfishness and conduct. Instead, we found, right from the beginning, the very human tendency to regard themselves only as the leaders of labour, not its mouthpieces, and we were witnesses of the spectacle of forceful speakers like Mr Pete Curran reduced to babbling impotency in their endeavours to ape the statesman. But instead of becoming first-rate statesmen, they simply became third-rate labour leaders.

When the day comes to write an epitaph upon the coffin of the parliamentary leaders of British Labour, it will run: 'These men died of statesmanship.'

From the beginning, these men were over-awed and over-weighted, and there is a funny little story told of one of the labour members, rebellious, young, and enthusiastic, who, watching the gorgeous spectacle of the opening of parliament, with its display of jewel and dress, turned to an older companion member and said: 'I say, Alf,

we've got to abolish this!' To which his friend, already a wiser and sadder man, replied: 'This is going to take a hell of a lot of abolishing!'

We, of course, took it for granted that with the 'horrible example' of Mr John Burns before them, they would scornfully refuse to take office in capitalist governments. Instead, we found, as indeed the event has proved, that some of them would be only too glad of the chance to do so.

And with all this there went an increasing tendency to take themselves so seriously that some of them developed into those slightly ridiculous figures, ponderous and humourless, to which the public have now become accustomed.

One of these labour leaders to whom, like the Scotsman, 'the Lord,' doubtless in response to prayer, 'had given a guid conceit o' himsel', was travelling to a certain conference in 1920 in a carriage in which some trades unionists were seated. After a while, nobody taking particular notice of him, he turned to the carriage and said portentously: 'Perhaps you don't know that you have a future prime minister in the carriage with you?' and was deeply offended when the carriage laughed at him. This was one of the gentlemen who are regarded as being in the running for the Labour Premiership stakes.

Of course, the wilder spirits of us in the year that followed that fateful 1906, expected 'scenes,' 'naming by the Speaker,' and even a bout with the Sergeant-at-Arms—a sort of exaggerated Irish Nationalist Party in fact. Those were the dreams of innocence.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

We anticipated smashing speeches, based upon our almost invariable experience of victory in our street corner meetings and debates with our political opponents. Instead, and with the exception of such giants as Philip Snowden and Ramsay MacDonald, and such sincere debaters as Keir Hardie, we found our men, abandoning the broadsword for the rapier, over-matched and overweighted in almost every debate by opponents whom they tried to meet with their own weapons, opponents who could afford to treat them with contempt.

Already the Labour Party, growing in numbers and inertia, was beginning to find the I.L.P. shackles irksome both to self-respect and to ambition.

The position inside the I.L.P. itself in these determinative years was interesting. The leaders, especially 'the Big Four,' Messrs MacDonald, Hardie, Snowden, and Glasier, knew, the writer believes and believed, perfectly well that the work of a lifetime was, if not actually in peril, at least stultified, and that the Labour Party was beginning to get the bit in its teeth, knew in their heart of hearts that all was not right with the party, but, enormously impressed by the mass-power of the Trades Unions and quite honestly believing, as Karl Marx had believed before them, that to break away from the Trades Unions meant political extinction, personal and party, they held on, hoping for the best.

So it was that they themselves, all absolutely honest men and not unidealists, developed, almost

unconsciously, a sort of minor caucus inside the Independent Labour Party itself, discountenancing in stolid, 'official' fashion the incipient revolt which now began to show itself and which came to a head in the Huddersfield I.L.P. Conference of 1908, where it fell to the lot of the writer to move the 'reference back' of a portion of the National Administrative Council's report, which raised the whole question of policy and tactics.

It was Victor Grayson who 'raised the devil.' Victor, an unknown man, who, acting as stop-gap for another speaker at a Colne Valley meeting a year or two before the time of the conference, had become the beloved of the Valley, much to the concern of the Labour Party leaders, who had in view a more orthodox and 'safer' candidate. First, they threatened to withdraw the official moneybags and speakers from the Colne Valley people if they persisted with Grayson. Colne Valley told them most politely to go to hell or Westminster—these Colne Valley people were no respecters of persons.

Then the leaders, as always, compromised, sending out a peacemaker, Mr Philip Snowden himself, who was infinitely more tactful and discerning than the others, and offering support. But Grayson's blood now being up, he said he would not run as a Labour man at all but as a straight Socialist, that he did not want the Labour Party's blessing, and that, generally, he was sick of labour leaders.

Anyhow, he won, standing as 'Independent Socialist,' and once more the British press became

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

lachrymose with visions of a red flood pouring over the constituencies. But they had no more reason to fear than in 1906, after the return of the Labour group. To-day they have no reason at all.

But behind the treatment of Victor Grayson as individual lay a much deeper question—the question as to whether the I.L.P., still remaining inside the Labour Party in alliance with the trades unions, should advocate what one of the speakers called ‘clean socialism’—a phrase that stuck—or whether, with the mass of the unions, they should continue to tread the broad and flowery paths of ‘Lib-Labism?’ That is to say, whether the I.L.P. should set the pace or go with the ruck?

The rebels, or ‘wreckers,’ as they were of course called, for we were inclined to libel insurgent youth by label, and it is one of the curses of the Socialist movement that a man is forced to bear a label of one kind or another, secured about one-third of the votes of the conference, but this was the high-water mark of revolt inside the I.L.P., the leaders of which suffered from the common illusion of most leaders—that getting rid of the critic meant getting rid of the ideas behind him.

How right the rebels were, despite the hot-headedness and egotism of youth, the event has shown, and it is of significance to note that quite recently one of the highest officials of the I.L.P., a man commanding the confidence of the whole party, told me that he had given it as his considered opinion to the survivors of ‘the Big Four’ that the I.L.P. in the years that were gone ought to have set the pace inside the Labour Party, even at the

90

cost of temporary success, instead of letting the trade unions crush the I.L.P. initiative by sheer dead-weight. Not only that, but after several long conversations with one of ‘the Big Four’ recently upon the condition of the Labour Party and the I.L.P., he wrote to me that in his opinion ‘the personnel of the Labour Party had failed,’ even if the Party itself had not done so.

The leaders of the I.L.P. are beginning to find out that there are victories which are defeats.

Sitting in the body of the hall at such conferences, I have often been amazed to remark the curious lack of imagination which even gifted men display when they become upholders of a system. In all the I.L.P. and other conferences which I attended, and for many years I was careful never if possible to miss a single conference, I can scarcely remember more than half a dozen efforts by middle-aged or elderly officialdom upon prickly questions of policy to understand the viewpoint of youth—especially to realise that youth *has* a viewpoint. The leaders never once made any effort to meet the rebels privately, with a view to exchange of ideas, and as good comrades. Youth, rebellious youth, in almost all cases was tacitly looked upon as the enemy, instead of, as it so often is, the inspirer, and the I.L.P. leaders themselves, with one or two exceptions, were in this not one whit better than their successors in the Labour Party of whose stodgy official outlook they so often and rightly complain. We often at such conferences had the uncomfortable feeling, which some of us at least vainly tried to hide from ourselves—we

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

were still very young—that the leaders, before they took their places on the congress platform, had already met and decided upon their plan of action, which, as they often stayed at the same hotel, was an easy matter, and which indeed was, technically, quite within their rights. But it effectually destroyed the spirit of comradeship.

Against youth, and the fresh ideas of youth, as the I.L.P. grew, there raised itself a sort of concretion—a dead wall which there was no getting round or getting through. The proof of which lies in the fact that over a period of many years, scarcely a single ‘rebel’ found his way to the N.A.C., or National Administrative Council, as the supreme executive was called. Sometimes, however, when a more than usually capable youth looked like making dangerous demonstration before the wall, the men behind simply reached down a fraternal hand and took him over, so buttressing the defence.

Not that we always saw these things at the time. Some of us, idealist and hoping against hope, did our best for years not to see them, hating to see spots on our own sun. But all the same the sun-spots were there, nor were we ourselves flawless.

It happened at a certain I.L.P. conference, where an attack upon the policy of the little mutual admiration society of the leaders had been planned, that we understood a certain rising light of the I.L.P., an ambitious and capable young man, was to support us. When the crucial point was reached, his voice, to our surprise, was silent.

When we next saw him he was occupying the platform, having been elected to the executive.

Some of us remember the speech of O'Connor Kessack, the Scots-Irishman, now dead, in which he humorously warned the 'rebels' that if they went against the leaders they would never 'get on.' 'Look at me,' he said. 'Once, I used to fight them. Now I don't—and look where I stand to-day!' It was at the London Memorial Hall Conference of the I.L.P., but his humour was a little bitter and rueful.

On the other hand, it is only fair to say that the rebels were sometimes exasperating and 'difficult,' and that the chairmen of these congresses, always 'official' and orthodox, were scrupulous in giving opposition speakers a fair field. Any rebel could catch 'the Speaker's eye,' and it sometimes came to me that the leaders were very glad to get the attack over so as to bring their own batteries into play, and, not least, to bring on that 'appeal of the gray hairs,' as it came to be known amongst us. This appeal lay in the keeping back until the last of the rebels had spoken of some venerable and orthodox figure who had probably done fine service in the I.L.P., and who would refer to 'hair grown gray in years of service,' etc., etc. Our congresses were sometimes horribly sentimental.

Many years after the 'clean socialists' had been more or less 'cleaned out' and Grayson had left the I.L.P., I tried to get at the queer psychology of the official mind by one day in a London street stopping Mr W. C. Anderson, the husband of Miss Mary Macarthur, an ambitious and talented

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

young Scot whose death was a severe loss to the I.L.P. I asked him why it was that at the Huddersfield and other conferences the leaders, of whom he had become one, never tried, just as human beings if for no other reason, to understand the view-point of 'the young men in a hurry,' as the rebels were sometimes called, and above all, why any attempt at movements counter to the orthodox view were nipped at the outset. He made the reply: 'You see, we never knew where such movements might get!'

There was no more to be said. It was an answer worthy of Mr Lloyd George himself in the House at question time.

Let it be said that these men were entirely honest in their belief that nothing should be done to cause any rift with the Labour Party and with the big battalions of the Trades Unions. But the form of their opposition was sometimes unhappy, un-human, and, as one ventures to think, uninspired.

Not that the I.L.P. in such matters was a particle worse than the average political party and was possibly a good deal better. But from a professedly idealist party, out to convert not only the older and 'wickedder' parties, but the world, one perhaps expected something more.

Nothing of the above, however, should be allowed to obscure the really fine work for Labour which the I.L.P. has accomplished. It cannot too strongly be stressed that to it and it alone is due the fact that there is a Labour Party to-day and that the national standard of life has been raised, and, whether we agree with them or not,

it had and still has in its ranks some of the most idealist and unselfish men and women to be found in any movement. But it has paid the penalty which the modern labour leaders are to-day paying—the penalty of letting the leaders become the led and of letting 'policy' dominate 'principle.' The Labour Party, which it once led, has long since passed out of its control, and it is now for the I.L.P. to decide whether they will remain inside the party or, once more taking neither purse nor scrip, go out into the world to preach the gospel. But the call does not often come twice either to parties or to men.

What is called 'Socialist control of the Trades Unions' is often bitterly complained of by those who think it immoral that the socialist tail should swing the labour dog.

The reason the I.L.P. for so many years inspired Trade Union policy was due to the fact that the best educated and most enthusiastic trades unionists were almost invariably I.L.P'ers who, not being afraid of hard work and anxious to convert the Unions to socialism, naturally got the secretarial and other executive positions where the hard work had to be done. Men of principle and ideals, they as inevitably controlled the dead-weight of the indifferent mass as brain controls body and as consciousness always controls unconsciousness. They *were* the brains of the unions, and many of them still are the brains.

But the Independent Labour Party, as an organisation, with much astuteness, always held itself in the background whilst giving the inspiration.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

The I.L.P. was Labour's 'hidden hand.' When a trades unionist who was also an I.L.P'er spoke, he did so as trades unionist, not as I.L.P'er.

Whenever the case for a trade union had to be put at the arbitration board, it was often an I.L.P'er who was chosen to put it. The I.L.P. got its point of view put forward not only inside the Unions and at the Trades Union and Labour Party Congresses, as at those of the General Federation of Trades Unions, through the officials who so often belonged to its ranks, but also outside on the public platform, where at every demonstration was to be heard the voice of the I.L.P., the voice which so often was the voice of Jacob—but the hand, the hand of Esau!

Whenever a volunteer was wanted for 'the imminent deadly breach,' an I.L.P'er would thrust himself forward with that two-fold eagerness of the egoist and of the propagandist—that blend of self and selflessness which has played the decisive rôle in the Labour movement.

That the voice of the I.L.P. is fainter is due to three things. First, the placing of the I.L.P. leaders of 'policy' before 'principle,' with resultant absorption by the bigger party, then, to the high-stomached pride of the big battalions of the Labour Party and its leaders ; and lastly, to the coming of the direct actionist, due to the war.

It may be that the I.L.P. has still a part to play, only one imagines it is not likely to play it within the ranks of the Labour Party with its tendencies of to-day. If it is to play such a part, it will have to get back the old spirit. For already it has

begun to betray that *arterio sclerosis* of party—that fatal clinging to old ideas—that impatience of new messages, and a blissful ignorance of the significance of the new forms which democracy in our times is assuming.

In the I.L.P. meetings which I have recently addressed or attended, a clinging to shibboleth and a stolid indifference to the problems facing the rising democracy were noticeable features. The I.L.P. is moribund, although like so many men and women who, believing themselves living, are dead in all but name, it does not know it. Time alone will show whether it can get back the old inspiration by taking up the old cross, if necessary even cutting itself free from the rotting body of the Labour Party, once more going out to tell the working man that he does not live by bread alone.

X

‘SOCIALIST UNITY’

No consideration of ‘the brain of Labour,’ as I have called the I.L.P., would be complete without some further reference to its old enemy, the S.D.F., or Social Democratic Federation, which has already been referred to and which, in its repeated change of name, has gone through various phrases, if not phases. In addition, some mention of the *Clarion* and other socialist movements, as their relation to the I.L.P. and of the attempts to bring about ‘Socialist Unity’ is necessary to the understanding of the evolution of the Labour and Socialist movement to its present stage.

For many years the S.D.F., chiefly because of its redoubtable leader and intellectual, Hyndman, and because it was first in the field, was regarded by the continental socialist and labour parties as ‘the brain of British Labour.’ It was orthodox Marxian, and orthodoxy in the continental labour movements is one of the first essentials. It taught ‘the materialist conception of history,’ that is, that man is formed simply if not always ‘purely’ by his physical environment—that he is, in a word, the creature of circumstance. And it naturally reserved its choicest denunciations for the I.L.P. comrades who, in remaining in the Labour Party,

98

the dust of which the S.D.F. had shaken off the soles of its feet, had, in the language of the time, 'bowed the knee to Baal.' Not that the S.D.F., once more, after manifold turnings, with its old name, has essentially changed either in phraseology or concept.

Democracy, especially Socialist-Democracy, develops its own dogmas and betrays such a tendency to crystallisation as sometimes puts that of the churches to shame.

This tendency to the crystallisation of every word and comma of the Socialist dogma has its latest exemplification in the resignation of Miss Sylvia Pankhurst from the Communist Party of Great Britain, her reason she says being that 'the comrades intended to enforce discipline in its most stultifying aspect. Comrade M'Manus, as chairman, informed me that they would not permit any member of the party to write or publish a book or a pamphlet without the sanction of the executive. Those who may differ from the executive on any point of principle, policy, or tactics, or even those whose method of dealing with agreed theory is not approved or appreciated by the executive, are therefore to be gagged.'

Even down to the Stuttgart and Copenhagen International Socialist Congresses, in 1907 and 1910 respectively, there still lingered this fetish of the S.D.F. I remember even quite recently being told by Danish Socialists—surely the most idealless and materialist of all continental socialists—that the S.D.F., or British Socialist Party as it had then become, really stood for British Labour!

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

As has been stated, the 'S.D.F.,' to give it its old name, and despite, or perhaps because of the distinguished intellectual equipment of some of its leaders, never at any time had any influence amongst the British Trades Unions, and this fact was beginning to dawn upon the continentals in the years preceding the war, who, for the first time, regarded the I.L.P., and rightly, as 'the brain of British Labour.' And in any case, the soul of the I.L.P'er, as we Clarion Scouts were to discover, is not the soul of the S.D.F'er.

One passes over 'the three tailors of Tooley Street' of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, as the Socialist Labour Party and half a dozen other mushroom parties, most of them preaching the gospel of hate of society as of one another—but all finding common ground in their hatred of the I.L.P. and the Labour Party, and so come to the third movement of any importance. This was the 'Clarion movement,' which never really was a movement. It was just one man and a newspaper—it is true, a remarkable man and an excellent paper—Mr Robert Blatchford and the *Clarion*. But there was about the Clarion cycling clubs and the Clarion Scouts something of the open-air—a free and human outlook—that free-lance outlook which sweetened the bitter sectarianism of socialism. The Clarion Scouts had at one time in London alone some five hundred members on their roll-call, for at that time, some of us 'seeing visions,' dreamt of Socialist Unity, with a very large 'S' and a very large 'U.'

We had many of the Labour M.P.s on our roll;

some most distinguished speakers and writers, including H. G. Wells, who wrote a very nice letter in his own meticulous handwriting to enclose his humble ' bob,' St John Ervine, Sidney Lewis Ransom, and Robert Blatchford, and we gave our services to any section of the movement which asked for them, acting up to our professions of ' socialist unity,' having both I.L.P'ers and S.D.F'ers upon our books. We were a sort of light cavalry of the movement, making our forays all around London, sending our speakers into the churches and chapels, raising Cain in respectable neighbourhoods, and entirely intent upon the trifling task of converting the metropolis. For we were in the stage of magic youth. We had only to wish to have.

We often threw what we called our ' flying column ' into Liberal and Tory meetings, and one of my memories from this time was that of bearding Mr Lloyd George in his own stronghold of the Queen's Hall and seeing the little Welshman, very astute, very smiling, and very indulgent, cocking one sardonic eyebrow at that corner of the upper tier from which we hurled socialist defiance at Liberals generally and Lloyd George himself in particular, demanding, full-lunged, that we should be given ten minutes on the platform to move an amendment to his resolution. He promised, but alas! even already he was beginning to suffer from that shortness of memory which overtakes the really great politician, and so we learnt that even in the Nonconformist Conscience a gulf was sometimes fixed between promise and performance.

Yet from the beginning we were cold-shouldered by the leaders of the I.L.P., some of whom were beginning to develop a very pretty quarrel with Robert Blatchford, and the branches of which boycotted us. The whole 'Clarion movement,' as such, and although the cycling clubs and club-houses still persist, fizzled out a few years after the Scouts had started in 1906, the beginning of the end coming when Mr Blatchford wrote his now famous 'German Peril' articles, his militant attitude upon the war giving it its *coup de grace*.

The *Clarion* movement opened the eyes of some of us to the slight differences between democratic theory and democratic practice. The bitterness of the comrades of the socialist parties whom we were trying to unite was to us a constant source of astonishment.

No movement surely has ever been such a prey to sectarianism as the Labour movement, although the rank and file were very much better than their leaders, and sectarianism, which in the later stages of a movement betrays weakness, in the earlier stages shows virility of outlook. Not only were the leaders in almost any party often quietly and bitterly hostile to the leaders in the rival socialist parties, not fearing to show it both by pen and tongue, but they were often deeply jealous and even hateful of one another inside their own party. In the I.L.P. itself, for example, the personal dislike of two or three of the leaders for one another was common knowledge in the party, but whenever 'the system' was threatened, all differences were smoothed over and a united face shown to the

enemy within the ranks. We had our tense moments, when it looked as though an open breach would come, notably at the Edinburgh I.L.P. conference in 1908, when a passage between two of the leaders on the platform will not easily be forgotten, but generally the appearance of unity was held, impregnable.

This sectional jealousy pursued us everywhere—even into the International Congresses where at least, for decency's sake, we did what was possible to keep up appearances. At these congresses, the rival British socialist parties were outwardly polite, but in secret showing their teeth, and behind the scenes of the British delegates' 'united' meetings there was often a general atmosphere of 'snarley-yow,' varied by that of an ominous politeness, and I think I am one of the very few who can lay hand on heart and say that I have never had direct quarrel with any man in the Labour and Socialist movement.

One of those little incidents so typical of this stage happened to the writer. It was just before one of the sessions of the International Congress at Stuttgart when I met in the street one of the I.L.P. leaders who has been chairman of the Labour Party in the House. He said to me in tones of low, angry protest: 'Why are you representing an S.D.F. branch? Why not an I.L.P.?' At that time, being fervent for socialist unity, I answered with some heat: 'I would as soon represent the one as the other. Are we not all Socialists?'

He turned away, and from that moment,

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

although we had been upon friendly terms and had spoken from the same platform more than once, I do not think we ever again exchanged a word. To suggest that Socialists were 'united' or stood for the same thing was the sin unforgivable. And one is bound to say that the leaders were right. We were not united in any way. They took good care of that. There was nothing 'big' about many of these men and women.

It was at the next congress, that at Copenhagen, that poor Harry Quelch, that faithful watchdog of the S.D.F., a man not only brilliant, but of sterling worth, hearing a comrade say that he thought the I.L.P. delegate we had elected to one of the honorary positions in connection with the British section was sincere, growled: "'Sincere!' Never trust an I.L.P. leader. Expect the worst from him. They're all the same.'

I am afraid we were all rather like quarrelling children, and the titter which went through a joint conference, in which some I.L.P'ers and S.D.F'ers had to meet the trades unionists, upon seeing across the wall behind the platform the inscription: 'Little children love one another!' may be excused.

I myself have addressed an audience of perhaps a couple of thousand at an East Ham, London, street corner, a district which at one time looked like making Socialist history, in the endeavour to woo what were then intended to be my future constituents, with the trifling disadvantage of a Liberal and Conservative cross-fire in front, and, at my back, the ribald howlings of 'comrades' of the Socialist Labour Party against my unhappy

‘ I.L.P.’ self, whilst from under my ear came screams of ‘labour fakir!’ from the half-dozen other ‘comrades’ who at that time constituted ‘The Socialist Party of Great Britain.’

Yet it was in this very same district, in the East Ham Town Hall, that I remember speaking from the same platform as Sir John Gorst, the former Minister of Education, who was not afraid to come upon the same platform as two such red-hot rebels as the Countess of Warwick and the writer. Even this ‘Machiavellian Father Christmas,’ with his white beard and bland spectacles, Tory though he was, set us Socialist sectaries an example in broad-mindedness, and I have a vivid recollection of a friendly little meeting in a West End mansion at which Sir John exchanged views with a Socialist factory girl upon the subject of education, frankly much to his disadvantage, but, as he admitted, exceeding enlightenment!

If it be imagined that any exaggeration of our comradely squabbles has been indulged in, it is only necessary to go through the old files of *Justice* on the one hand, and the *Labour Leader* on the other, when it will be seen how rare it was for the party leaders to give the rival devil his due. It did sometimes happen, but, on the whole there was a lack of chivalry and fineness of feeling in the relations of the rival leaders. The rank and file often would have united on common ground, but the leaders quietly but surely kept them apart.

Sometimes we of the Scouts made efforts to bring together leaders of the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. upon a common platform, notably at a big ‘socialist

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

unity' meeting which we held on one Sunday afternoon in the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, but with the most discouraging results, not a single I.L.P. speaker appearing upon a platform which drew great crowds of the rank and file of all sections of the movement, some of them travelling from places as distant as Liverpool. I.L.P'ers and S.D.F'ers would come to our dances but not to our platforms, and we made the interesting discovery about Socialist human nature that Socialists would dance together but would not speak together. What we failed to recognise was that these differences of outlook and feeling were not accidental but temperamental—that is, fundamental—in other words, that men and women calling themselves 'Socialists,' misled by the external and the transient, that is, by the bread and butter objective, as by vaguely human feelings common to all the sons of men, losing themselves in a forest of phrases and words such as 'democracy' and 'humanity,' and imagining themselves therefore to be headed for the same goal, were often nearer in temperament and feeling to some of their Liberal and Tory opponents than to one another. It is the thing which the world will soon recognise in the labour movement of to-day. It is the thing that will yet cleave that movement from crown to heel.

Men and women are united and divided by feeling, by temperament, rather than by brute economic or by class.

That is something which Labour has yet to learn.

XI

‘ DIRECT ACTION ’

THE new force in the British Labour movement, making its appearance for the first time as a definite policy, and since the war, is the force of direct action. It is the force which has changed the course of the world movement and which for the time and since the war has swung the British movement on to unfamiliar paths.

By ‘ direct action,’ I mean that section of British labour which, for the advance of labour, advocates the use of the strike, to the partial or total exclusion of political action; or, with the strike, the use of physical force in any form. The immediate goal of the direct actionist is the century-old dream of the General Strike, when all the workers of the country, to a man or woman, are to throw down their tools and hold society to ransom.

Here we must be careful to distinguish between ‘ anarchy ’ and ‘ physical force ’ direct action, two things often confused.

The ‘ anarchist ’ *may* favour physical force, but he may, if he be an anarchist-communist of the Tolstoy type, be opposed to all physical force and to the taking of life. ‘ Anarchy ’ does not necessarily imply belief in force, but simply refers to a concept of society in which the individual will be supreme and government and the official have no place.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

The anarchist says: 'The State—that is the enemy!'

And indeed this is just the difference between the anarchist and the socialist. The first does not believe in organised society—the other does.

The 'direct actionist' may be either socialist or anarchist. In Great Britain he is often neither the one nor the other. The striker usually strikes because the other fellow strikes, as has already been pointed out. Not because he has any political creed, or because he wants to be a saviour of society. He wants to save himself.

The coming of direct action into the Trade Unions of Great Britain has undoubtedly marked the most revolutionary change which the policy of the Labour movement has ever known. It is an incursion which has staggered not only society but the labour leaders themselves, who take quite a lot of staggering. How much the labour leaders at least have to fear from the new incursion will be demonstrated in the following.

As we have already seen in the chapter on 'The War and Demos,' direct action, as a fixed policy, whether of the peaceful strike, the armed strike, or *sabotage*—the French syndicalist expression for the smashing of machinery and the destruction of property—until the war, never appealed to the British temperament. It found its original and natural appeal in the Latin mind in the latter '80's and at one time spread, mercurial, through the French and Italian unions, notably through the famous Confédération Générale du Travail of France. And it still grips the Latin mind.

The British workman, it is true, often went on strike before the war, but he did so, not from choice and certainly not from settled policy, but as alternative to advance by parliament and because of some immediate dispute. The ‘ syndicalist,’ as the continental direct actionist was called, went on strike because he liked it, because he believed in direct action as a policy, and because he hated parliament and the politician—often, it must be confessed, with excellent reason.

But in our day, the Bolshevik is the direct actionist *par excellence*. The Bolshevik, in theory, is not anarchist, but State Socialist—or, rather, he *was* State Socialist. Lenin’s original concept of the Russian administration was a centralised bureaucracy with a horde of officials. The thing that forced his hands, made him abandon Socialism and adopt ‘ State Capitalism,’ as he has now confessed he has done in the *Krasnaya Nov* or *Red News*, was human nature—Russian human nature. He found that humanity will not work for love—it still needs the incentive of profit.

What has actually happened to Russia under the Bolshevik régime is that it has drifted back to autocracy in another form than that of the Czar. Democracy in our day always trends to bureaucracy, that is, autocracy.

But in Russia, as in Ireland, there is a deeply ingrained individualism with which even Lenin has had to reckon. That is why, despite the Lenin Dictatorship, Soviets have been formed throughout the country, these Soviets being practically ‘ working men’s committees ’ for local administration. They

are the direct enemies of bureaucratic centralisation, and between these two forces, of Lenin the bureaucrat on the one hand, and Michael the *muhzik* on the other, Russia will be torn.

All this is essential to the understanding of the bolshevik direct action propaganda in the British unions, which aims at the creation of 'Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils' as in Russia after the Revolution, and even so recently as 1920, whilst I was in Wales, the proposition for the formation of what amounted to local Soviets inside certain unions was being seriously advocated by a well-known labour leader.

Democracy is always playing hide and seek with itself. It imagines that by changing the form, it changes the character, that by changing the propaganda it changes the propagandist. And so it is that the Bolsheviks in the British Unions claim that the ballot can never end the private property and ownership rule of capitalism, the bullet is the thing, because, as they very definitely state in press and on platform, and to quote the words of one of their principal British exponents : 'Persuasion is useless. The minority who own everything cannot be converted. We aim at *power*, not persuasion.' Bolshevism is the first deliberate appeal to force by democracy.

And so it talks of developing its own organisation inside the capitalist system, instead of trying to capture the enemy's organisation, and so hopes that the Bolshevik organisation will one day edge out and replace the existing system.

The instrument they propose to use in the first

place is the Workers' Committee or Soviet, which is to replace parliament and centralised administration by the official. They say that the Shop Stewards' movement and the establishment of Workers' Committees in the workshops of the country are the counterpart of the Russian Soviet organisation, adding that the French *délégués de l'atelier* and the German *Werkstättenvertrauensmänner* exactly correspond to the British Shop Stewards. The Soviet, they say, is a synthesis of the industrial and political aspects of the working-class movement of to-day, and it is through the development of the Soviet that the social revolution is to come and, in their own words, ‘humanity be saved.’

Poor fools!

The bomb, the bullet, and the barricade are to be used, if necessary. These are to be led up to by encouraging the British workers to strike on all and every occasion—for any or no reason ‘just to keep their hands in’ and to get them accustomed to the revolutionary idea. The strike is first perhaps to be peaceful; then armed; then sabotage is to be practised . . . and then presumably hell is to break loose.

Only, the day after ‘the revolution,’ if it comes, there will come the counter-revolution. The barricades will be taken back by the comrades of the men who man them. And the whole direct action structure will dissolve into thin air, even as the bolshevik structure has dissolved in Russia.

I cannot do better than quote here the words of Mr Robert Williams, in *The New Labour Outlook*.

'This deluded but loveable fire-eater says: 'When it comes, the revolutionary situation will be the result of the partial or complete collapse of the present order of society. . . . Mass action will produce general strike organisation on the lines of the Workers' Councils; this will challenge existing political organisation. . . . Insistently will come the demand: "All power to the Workers' Councils." This is the underlying idea of the Soviets. . . .

'Parliamentary democracy is a myth exploded by the war and the developments arising from the war. The Soviet idea, or that of the Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Councils, is one which, by factory and workshop representation, goes right down to the roots of the Capitalist System and destroys it at its very foundations.'

I think I remember Mr Vernon Hartshorn, M.P., who was recently said to have resigned his post on the Miners' Executive owing to the policy having passed into the hands of the extremists, saying something like Mr Williams a few short years ago. Within another few years, we shall see Mr Williams either part of the Labour Party political machine, or, because he has fire and youth, broken away from both Communist Party and Labour Party to help to lead the democracy which is coming.

As a matter of fact, Mr Robert Williams himself has now incurred the Communist displeasure, the bolshevik paper, *The Communist*, which at intervals runs amok with a hatchet amongst the Labour and Trade Union leaders, lumping him together with

certain of these leaders and all the Labour Party M.P's, with one exception, under the heading: ‘ The Secret History of the Attempted Betrayal.’ This ‘betrayal’ having reference to the miners’ strike of 1921, certain leaders being referred to as ‘traitors’ and their leadership as ‘treachery, treachery, and more treachery.’ All of which bears a familiar sound to those of us who more than a decade ago had to face the objurgations of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Socialist Labourists, and the Socialist Party of Great Britain! It is the eternal squabbling of the sects.

In the meantime, he and the other direct actionists might remember one thing—that famous Leeds Convention of 1917, which, hailing the Russian Revolution with joy, attempted to form Soviets for Britain, ‘Bob’ Williams himself seconding one of the resolutions. Where are the Soviets in England to-day, Mr Williams? and what happened to the Leeds Convention? Mr Bob Smillie, the finest character in the Labour movement, who, I venture to think, is to-day a disillusioned and heartbroken man, will supply the answer.

The bolshevik, as the ‘constitutional’ labour leader, will, whether he likes it or not, one day have his nose dragged back to the grindstone of fact—the fact that nothing, neither strike nor revolution, successful or otherwise, can take the place of the spade-work of education or *consciousness*. The proletariat will not have to strike their fetters from off their limbs—when they are educated they will find that the fetters, which they themselves have made, will have fallen off themselves.

Labour: The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Only before that lesson is learned, much blood will be shed and many dreams will be broken.

Which is not to say that the Soviet principle, as a counter to bureaucracy and for the proper representation and protection of minorities, is not going to play a big part in the development of democracy. But its day is not yet, nor can it be used with effect until long years of education, spiritual and mental, have first done their work.

It is safe to say that if the war had never come, the voice of the direct actionist would never have been heard in the land. The war made way in Britain for the direct actionist, or 'bolshevik,' as he is often called, because war is always the harrow which, tearing across cherished preconception and tradition in the human mind, makes it receptive to the seed of new ideas, good and bad. Perhaps it is the purpose of war in the cosmic economy.

War did two things. In the first place, as the newspaper columns of the last few years have shown, it cheapened human life, and, driving man, the atavist, back to primitive instincts, made him prefer force to persuasion. The strikes from 1918 to 1921 were made on the battlefields of France. Any statesman who, in future, unleashes the dogs of war, is also unleashing something that may one day tear his own throat and the throat of society.

Secondly, in its demand for man-power, it forced up the standard of living and, as has been pointed out, giving the taste of power in the mouth, made the worker discontented: a discontent divine or damnable just as you like to look at it.

But it is all this mental 'unrest' which, destroying

his powers of concentration, has made the working man lazy and ready to listen open-mouthed to any 'patent panacea' which promises to give him money without effort. This was the opportunity for which the direct actionist was waiting, and, getting his inspiration from Moscow, he inoculated the new direct action virus, nor did he administer it in homœopathic doses.

The new virus 'took' most readily, as might have been expected, inside the Welsh and Scottish unions, with their Celtic extremity of temperament which they have in common with the French Celt himself. The Englishman quickly caught the infection but, so to speak, in a less passionate way than the Celtic Fringe and certainly with less conscious realisation of what direct action meant.

The Irishman, although himself Celt and extreme, here as in other things, was a law unto himself. Nationalist and religionist before all else, he was comparatively uninterested in belly as opposed to soul, his natural tendencies being helped by the fact that, untouched by war, his body, whilst the war lasted, was perhaps the best fed body in Europe. Then that taint of 'Bolshevism,' which he associated with irreligion, was anti-toxin sufficient to make him immune to the new poison.

The conversations which I had last year with the Irish labour leaders, including Mr Thomas Foran, the president of the Irish Transport Workers, and Mr Thomas Johnstone (like Parnell, an Englishman), the secretary of the Irish Labour Party, made it perfectly clear to me that direct action on the industrial field would have little appeal

for Irishmen until they had first settled their own affairs.

But that the Bolshevik wedge has met with a certain success and split the European Unions up to a point is shown, for example, by the most powerful trade union federation in the world—that of the Confédération Générale du Travail of France, which, at Lille, in 1921, cast nearly as many votes for Joining Lenin's Third International as remaining with the International Trades Union Federation at Amsterdam—the older and orthodox body. At their previous congress the Leninites only scored less than half the votes cast.

The Moscow policy has in fact cleft the French Labour movement as it may one day cleave the British, and has rendered it powerless. Two years ago there were 1,700,000 members affiliated to the French Confederation, which is the Trade Union Congress of France. To-day there are not more than 500,000.

What success the new direct action propaganda is, however, likely ultimately to have in the British Unions may be forecasted from the result of the attempts already made in pre-war days to convert the British trade unionist from political to direct action.

In the year 1910, one of the first and most determined attempts in our times to bring about this conversion was made by the famous French syndicalist leader, Madame Sorgue. This lady, once regarded by the Portuguese government as so dangerous that they did her the honour of giving her a Portuguese warship to escort her out

of the country, was a remarkable though typical example of the Latin direct actionist, and had been a leader in the great Milan and Parma strikes. Like so many of those other Amazons of the Red Army, she was an aristocrat, her father being Durand de Gros, the French philosopher, and her uncle, Estomine, having been the Senior Admiral of the Czar’s Baltic Fleet.

She paid one of her first visits to the writer, with the object of enlisting the aid of a labour weekly of which he was then acting editor, and with that grotesque failure to grasp the psychology of the British workman so common to her type, from Bakunin in the ’50’s to Lenin in the twentieth century, confided to him her belief that the British workman was about to throw his leaders to the dogs, abandon political action, and bring ‘the revolution’ by the General Strike. She had already had what she called ‘*un grand succès*,’ and at that time regarded Mr Havelock Wilson, the leader of the Seamen’s and Firemen’s Union, and, during the war, the most militant anti-German in the country, of all men, as the man of all the British Labour leaders most advanced towards syndicalism and direct action!

And this lady had many ‘*grands succès*.’ Amongst the seamen and firemen in Glasgow, Liverpool, and the other seaports she had tumultuous reception. These, of all men, owing to their calling, the least organisable as, in labour matters at any rate, least educated and understanding, naturally cheered like thunder when ‘Sorgue,’ as she liked to be called, spoke to them of revolution and of ‘tyrants’

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

in their own tongue, for she was an accomplished linguist. They cheered her exactly as their successors in England to-day are cheering the Sorgues of our time—but they would also have cheered her had she spoken on Einstein's theory of relativity, for she was a slashing, picturesque figure, a tall, narrow-hipped, full-busted woman—a real 'angel of the revolution.'

I was also on the platform when Tom Mann, perhaps England's most redoubtable strike leader, a little later launched what was to be the call to revolution, but it fizzled out like a damp squib, and although I believe this gentleman is still direct actionist in theory, he is in practice a perfectly respectable member of the labour movement.

Sorgue and Mann had no more doubt in those days that 'the revolution' was going to break out to-morrow morning in England than Lenin had after he came to power, or than some of the Bolsheviks have to-day, although they are beginning 'to hae their doots.' For the direct actionist is usually a hopeless optimist. Lenin himself has now begun to learn his lesson—the lesson of the psychology of the British worker—it is only his misguided followers in the British unions, mostly drawn from the ranks of very callow youth, who still believe in 'the Day.' If ever these young men translate theory into action and erect the barricades, it will be, literally, a modern 'slaughter of the innocents,' which would be a pity, for they are often deeply sincere.

Lenin himself asked a friend of my own who recently spent some weeks with him in Moscow,

whether a certain obscure socialist society in Wales, pledged to ‘direct action,’ with a membership of perhaps a few thousand, ‘did not represent at least one million of British workers?’ Every time a great strike is launched, the bolshevists or direct actionists here believe that it is the loosing of the flood-gates. And every time they are disappointed.

And they are and will be disappointed for just the same reason that the solider thinkers of Labour have always been disappointed by the labour masses whenever great issues have presented themselves: just because of one simple fact—the fact that the direct actionists, like all mobs, are *unconscious*—shouting to-day for physical force, to-morrow for something else. Lack of education and unconsciousness constitute that paralysing atmosphere which prevents the Labour masses, hitherto, on the political or industrial fields, in Great Britain or outside it, from getting anywhere.

As the strength of a chain is its weakest link, and as the strength of the Labour Party itself is measured by the actual number of men and women in its ranks who are educated and ‘conscious,’ so the strength of the direct action movement inside the British Labour Party is measured by the number of men and women who are convinced direct actionists, not only by feeling but by thinking. And if I were asked as to how many of such conscious direct actionists there were within the millions of organised labour in this country, I would reply with full assurance that I was over-estimating when I said perhaps fifty thousand. Possibly

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

twenty thousand would be nearer the mark, and the majority of those would be inside the ranks of one socialist party—the Communist Party.

But if this be so, it may be asked why the labour leaders do not expel the fifty thousand and be done with it ?

They do not do so for two reasons. First of all, this 'fifty thousand' have, for the moment, a power out of all proportion to their numbers for the reasons given in the preceding pages. With high cost of living and lower wages following on the heels of war, they have a potent weapon for stirring up the indifferent masses, who neither know what they would be at nor very much care. In the second place, not having had the moral courage to tackle 'ca' canny' and the indiscriminate use of direct action at the outset, the leaders to-day find themselves powerless to do so, but, like other 'statesmen,' hang on desperately, Micawber-like, hoping for 'something to turn up.' Kicking out the bolshevist to-day would mean kicking themselves out, and no labour leader is going to put the boot to his own rear.

If the labour leaders did to-day what they ought to have done years ago—that is, tell the rank and file that by organised malingering, combined with promiscuous striking, they were heading for destruction, the leaders well know they would suffer the fate of men like Mr Vernon Hartshorn, M.P., who, as we have just seen, felt himself compelled to resign all official posts on the Miners' Executive, because of the extremists.

Of course, the Labour Party continues to pass

its fatuous resolutions formally to exclude the Communists or Bolsheviks, who are so sure of their strength that they had the effrontery at the 1921 Labour Congress to propose to join the Labour Party without accepting its constitution. But you can exclude a party without excluding the members of the party. The Labour Party is honeycombed with bolshevism because the Trades Unions are honeycombed, and you can't exclude a Trades Unionist because he thinks he is a bolshevik, or, believing in the strike, and discontented, listens to the bolshevik. One uses the word 'thinks,' advisedly, because the actual conscious Bolsheviks are but a tiny minority with a unique capacity for infecting the blind majority.

From visits to Wales and Scotland it has become painfully clear to the writer how chaotic is the mind of the average direct actionist. Men who talk glibly of forming soviets, and of taking over the country, including the mines and the railways, not only do not even know what a soviet is but have never taken the trouble to work out a practicable scheme for the organisation and running of society if malign fate ever gave the direct actionist or Bolshevik a chance to fulfil his ambition.

The very men who practised sabotage in the Scottish mines during the miners' strike of 1921—that terrible exposure of Trades Union dissension which will leave its scars upon Labour for years to come and which showed that Labour's 'Triple Alliance' of Miners, Transport Workers, and Railwaymen, was but the 'Cripple Alliance,' by which it was described on the posters of a labour

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

newspaper—had, in the mass, and always excepting a handful of leaders, as little idea as to how they would administer the mines if the mine owners handed them over to-morrow, as to administer the country itself. The mines may be and possibly are badly administered to-day, and the wages proposed by the mine owners in some cases were so shamefully low that even the Employers' Federation expressed its disgust, but what the direct actionist is always forgetting is that not only is there no assurance that the miners themselves would administer them better, but that they are unable to give any such assurance. (I am here deliberately speaking of administration by the miners themselves, for the demand for 'nationalisation' is only the preliminary to 'socialisation,' and in the minds of the dominating sections of the miners there lies the determination, in God's good time, to administer the mines for the nation upon the basis of the old Guilds, for the new 'Guild Socialist' movement has permeated the Trades Unions far more than is generally suspected, as witness the Builders and certain sections of the Miners.)

And the reason they are unable to give such assurance is because the Miners are not only fighting amongst themselves on policy—and even at that they are the most united body of men in the kingdom, which tells the tale of the other unions—but in the one and a half millions of the Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen, and Transport Workers, they have so far been unable to compose their own internal differences. There

is also that other fact, patent to all men, that the very men who use direct action in their demand for the nationalisation of the mines, don't always vote for their own Labour candidates—even in rebel Wales! And if men won't vote right, how can they strike right?

To avoid misunderstanding I may say that I personally am in favour of nationalisation of the mines, when the majority of the people of this country have been converted and trained to the idea—not before. And that day is very far off.

The strike is obviously justified against unbearable wrong, unremedied after persistent agitation or irremediable by political action. But how many strikes since the war and up to the time when unemployment had become a national nightmare, have been made because of 'unbearable wrong' to Labour?

If a General Strike, that dream of the Direct Actionist, that strike of 'all trades and industries' which in 1834 was also the dream of Robert Owen, the man who was the father of the General Strike, were ever forced through to success, a most improbable result, as will be later demonstrated, and the nation, with pistol at head, were made to stand and deliver, the government being turned over to the direct actionists and a Bolshevik government sitting at Westminster with the Red Flag over the Victoria Tower, the leaders would be faced the day after with the counter-revolution, coming partly from the disgruntled Bolshevik, as we have seen in Russia, and partly from the average British working man, who, at heart, is still Liberal or Tory, or, at

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

most, 'reformist labour,' and who would promptly give up 'direct action' against the capitalist for direct action against the labour leaders with unhappy results. For the direct actionist forgets that what is accepted by the working man without complaint under a capitalist government would not be so accepted from his own comrades under a Soviet government. That is human nature.

Many lies have been written about Lenin and his Russian Bolshevist *régime*, but the following is fact.

One of the leaders of the London typographers, accompanied by Mr Dick Wallhead, the chairman of the Independent Labour Party, was recently shown around a printing works of the bolshevists in Moscow, the work set for each day per man being explained. When they got outside, he turned to Wallhead and said: 'Why, Wallhead, any ordinary London "comp." would do that work in two and a half hours!' Incidentally, they learned that, even at that, the Russian bolshevist compositor refused to finish his day's task, and in certain factories these 'ca' canniers' got a thousand cigarettes per month per man to keep them up to the scratch.

What would the British labour leaders do in like circumstances? Would they shoot the very men they had taught under capitalism to 'ca' canny'? Would they put them in jail? And then, supposing the tired gentlemen in question went on strike? Would the government forbid all strikes, as the Bolshevik government in Russia forbade them?

And so the General Strike and so-called

'successful' revolution would collapse in blood and tears.

Sorgue herself told me of the great strikes of Parma and Milan, one of the first approaches to a 'General' strike in our day, which she organised. Even though at Parma the women lay down before the locomotives to prevent them running, the strike failed. M. Briand, the present French premier, broke the great French General Strike when all the French railways were held up, by simply calling up the strikers to the colours, as indeed his friend Mr Lloyd George would have broken a General Strike in this country had it followed on the heels of the Miners' Strike, and when, in the case of that strike, the only difficulty of the authorities was to pick and choose from the thousands who stood in queue as volunteers for 'citizen defence,' the mass of them working men.

The most complete and formidable General Strike which has ever been attempted was organised by my friend, Mr Charles Lindley, the Secretary of the Swedish Transport Workers' Federation, who in 1909 told me the full story. Although 200,000 of 'all trades and industries' took part in that terrible six months' tug of war between workman and employer, the men, in Lindley's own words, 'were beaten to earth at the finish.'

The grotesque and 'inspired' misrepresentations of the apostles of direct action, Lenin and Trotzky, as of their Bolshevik followers, would be laughable if they were not so dangerous. So long as the bolshevik is regarded as only a crook or a crank, so long will he be a danger. When it is understood

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

that men like Lenin and Trotzky, however detestable their views may be, are absolutely sincere fanatics (all fanatics are sincere!) and that the same applies to many of their followers in this country, the better for society, for society will then know what it is up against.

I have personally known in the old days and for some fourteen years, three of the members of the Bolshevik government, Kollontay, Balabanov, and Theodor Rothstein, and know them all to be entirely sincere and self-sacrificing individuals who would not for a moment be associated with a government or system in which they did not believe. But these people, like thousands of other Bolsheviks or direct actionists in the British Labour movement, have been seduced by phrases, helped by the spur of indignation at the dreadful inequalities of present day society, for, as many of them have said to the writer: 'Nothing can be worse than the present!' Unfortunately for them, to-day's Bolshevik Russia is proving that very clearly to the world—but in another sense than the direct actionists intended. Like their *confrères* in Great Britain, they ignore everything that it is convenient to ignore—like all humanity, 'they believe what they want to believe.'

'We are hungry,' said Madame Balabanov to a lady acquaintance of the writer's, who had visited Russia under the bolshevik régime, 'but at least we have our freedom!' all ignoring of the fact that Russia to-day has been filled with the spies and *agent provocateurs* of Communism to replace those of Czarism, all ignoring of the rain of decrees and edicts, and even though every principle

of democracy has been sacrificed piecemeal, under the urgent drive of circumstance. 'The Bolshevik believes what he wants to believe.'

But the convinced bolshevik comrades in the British unions at least, as that great unconscious mass calling itself bolshevik to-day, will one day give up direct action for political action—or inaction, for many of them will leave the labour movement in disgust. But before they go, and before the other bolsheviks have in despair reverted to political action, they will succeed in splitting the Labour Party into two and possibly into three parts. From them, Society has nothing to fear—the Labour leaders, to-day, everything.

A German has written: 'There is nothing so dangerous as the man who has nothing to lose.' But the British workman has much to lose. That is why he will not pledge the fruits of a century of trade unionism upon the dice-throw of direct action.

But before ten years have passed, I venture to prophesy that in these islands Bolshevism and direct action, in the sense of brute force and despite the fact that, as mentioned later, certain circumstances may force Demos into its widespread trial, will be spoken of much as we speak to-day of the Comet of last year.

Product of the Great War, it will have flared its way across the political firmament and will have quenched itself in the void which men call 'physical force.'

XII

GOAL AND TACTICS

THE Labour movement stands apart from all others in its lack of cohesion. Made up of the most divergent elements of any world-movement to-day, it is a movement which agrees upon nothing—neither upon goal nor tactics. Demos, the blinded giant, like some sightless pachyderm, plunges, now here, now there, without sense of direction as without method. The organ of the Independent Labour Party writing on the Labour Party's annual congress at Brighton in 1921, said: 'The conference has dispersed, delegates have returned to their districts, and still we lack what most we need—a plan of action, a co-ordination of all the Labour forces, political and industrial, a great, united, well-prepared drive forward of the working-class movement. . . .'

The goal of Mr Arthur Henderson or Mr J. H. Clynes is not the goal of Lieut.-Colonel Malone. The goal of Mr George Lansbury is as far removed from that of his friend and Communist comrade, Nikolai Lenin, as is his concept of the idea of God removed from that of the great Russian. Mr H. M. Hyndman's heaven would be Mr J. H. Thomas's hell, whilst the 'There is a happy land' sublimation of the nonconformist trades unionist would for Mr George Bernard Shaw be a very

128

fair imitation of purgatory—although one rather suspects that Mr Shaw, being a saint, needs a touch of fire and brimstone to make him perfectly happy. In fact, if by some mistake the rival leaders of labour ever found themselves together in heaven, there would soon be hell!

The man in the street, who knows everything and nothing, certainly does not know that the thing which even more than divergence of goal makes the British as other labour movements like a Jumping Jack, its limbs uncontrolled by brain, disarticulate and moving independently of one another, is tactics.

For a quarter of a century the various socialist bodies have been at one another's throats upon this question of tactics. Rivers of ink have flown and streams of blood (on paper) have been shed by the leaders of the rival sections upon the simple question of method. For years the columns of *Justice* like the Erne in the ballad, 'ran redundant with blood' . . . all upon tactics. The organs of the little sectaries of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (the smaller the party the bigger the title) foamed at the mouth . . . on tactics. The Labour congresses became apoplectic at times on . . . tactics. Our International congresses 'saw red' on the same question. Our movement has been torn upon tactics, tactics, tactics.

You may call a man a blackguard and he may forgive you. You may accuse him of being a seducer, and he possibly will be rather flattered than otherwise. But tell him he has no humour—and, especially if he is humourless, he will forgive

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

you neither in this world nor the world to come, life everlasting! It is the sin unforgivable.

In the Labour and Socialist movement we also had our unforgivable sin.

You might, and sometimes did, call the leaders of your particular body 'liars.' They forgave. You stood on your hind legs and accused them of having 'sold the movement and themselves'; and they forgot it by the next congress—perhaps. 'Fakirs' and 'traitors' were two words in which we rather specialised between 1909 and 1914. And even those wicked words were forgotten. But one thing the leaders never forgave, and that was a difference upon tactics.

I have seen a member of a certain Socialist Party solemnly 'court-martialled' for writing in the columns of a socialist paper outside that the tactics of the party and its leaders were and had been disastrous. And I have known the same question of tactics more than once to cause the rupture not only of political but of personal friendships which had stood the test of years.

Some of us at this time were just beginning to get some hazy notion of the significance of the recrimination attaching to questions of tactics. But none of us realised that the reason we were so divided upon *tactics*, both in our individual parties and in the Labour movement as a whole, was because we were divided upon *goal*.

The Social Democratic Federation, for instance, visualised a sort of clockwork heaven 'at the end of the socialist and labour road,' in which everything was to be run by highly intelligent if rather

heartless officials—something, in fact, like pre-war Germany. The dreams of its leaders, always excepting such splendidly human men as William Morris, the poet, were really, although they did not realise it, the dreams of the German Junker—whom, incidentally, they often hated!

In the Social Democratic paradise, I imagine that classes in economics were to play the major part and headwork was to replace the harps and hymnals of the 'Pleasant Sunday Afternooners' of certain sections of the movement. Man, Heaven help him, in that paradise of intellect, was to be a perfectly ordered perfectly functioning animal, with the soul, of course, very properly eliminated and the idea of God sterilised and labelled, whose bible was to be 'The Material Interpretation of History,' and whose gods were to be of the earth earthy.

But even in the paradise of Social Democracy there would, I am afraid, be a serpent, because there would be an Eve. The old Adam of the Social Democrats did its best to keep its Eve, in other words, its wife, outside the movement, for the S.D.F. paradise was a paradise of the male, and the soul of Social Democracy is a male soul. The average S.D.F'er rarely brought his women-folk to his branch meetings, even when they wanted to come, and certainly never encouraged them to do so. And how bitterly some of them at least felt about the tacit relegation of the woman to a place a good deal lower than the angels was shown by the deep resentment expressed sometimes by such women, leading even to open breach

between certain undaunted females of the federation and certain magnificent males.

Mr Belfort Bax, the distinguished metaphysician, and a prominent member of the S.D.F., even went so far as to carry his metaphysical conceptions of 'the weaker sex' to the point where he appeared to rule them out of serious consideration as humans. How well I remember this really lovable man, sunk in the fogs of intellect, his hands resting on his stick, once leaning across the table of a Scandinavian restaurant to mildly expostulate with me, when I had ventured to take seriously the words of a distinguished woman socialist with whom I had disagreed: 'But what does it matter? She is a woman, and women can't think!' all oblivious of the very capable lady by his side, his wife, who gently ordered every act of the great man's life.

She, good soul, just beamed upon him as she might upon a naughty boy who didn't know what he was talking about.

But in the long run, even the S.D.F. was unable to keep out its Eves, who, fortunately for it, brought a saner, a more human atmosphere into this movement of the intellectuals, who, it is only fair to say, were infinitely better than their dismal and certainly unscientific creed which stresses the effect of his environment upon man, whilst ignoring the other half of the medal—the reaction of man upon his environment. Determinists, as most of them were, believing man to be the creature of his environment, they yet showed a very real self sacrifice for their Socialist faith, and the writer at least has

little other than grateful and happy memories of the little band of devoted men and women with whom he worked for so many years and from whom he learnt so much. Here, as in so many other similar sects, religious and otherwise, the man was better than the creed; and the rank and file more open-minded and more human than some of their leaders.

The goal which the Independent Labour Party visualised is not so easy of definition as that of their enemy, the S.D.F., but it at least had the merit of being one towards which women and men were to climb together hand in hand as good comrades and friends. In the beginning, at least, it was a sort of 'peace on earth good-will towards men' visualisation—a sort of benevolent modification of the orthodox Christian goal, as indeed was to be expected from a body which drew so many of its earlier recruits from the churches and which numbered so many clergymen amongst its leading adherents. It contemplated, after the lapse of time necessary for the I.L.P. propaganda to do its work, a society in which everybody was to be more or less actuated by the best possible intentions, at times forgetful of the fact that good intentions alone, without direction, frequently end in a very unpleasant place indeed.

The I.L.P., in a word, had invincible belief in the essential rectitude of human nature—a belief that was at once its strength and its weakness. Intuitively, it recognised the god in man and conveniently ignored the devil.

The Social Democratic goal of the Clockwork

State, fortunately for itself, it scarcely took the trouble to consider. Nor did it give much of its effort and inspiration to practical consideration of the form which society might be expected to take under Socialism. When we on the I.L.P. platforms were asked that eternal round of questions by the man in the street: 'Who was to do the dirty work under Socialism?' 'Where was the money to come from?' 'Would the Socialist State have a king or a president?' we, as a rule, facilely sidestepped our questioners by saying that the future could take care of itself, forgetful that the man in the street, whom we looked upon much as some missionaries look upon the naked savage, 'as a damn nuisance that had to be converted,' had a perfect right to an answer. In fact, we refused, cleverly and indefinitely, as some theologians, to define our goal.

And we still refuse to define it. And still the Social Democrats lose themselves in definition. And still both I.L.P. and S.D.F., or rather the S.D.F.'s successors, the Communists, quarrel upon tactics. And still the Trade Unionists, heavily indifferent as to goal, save the immediate goal of more wages for less work, ride the merry-go-round of strike and congress and parliament, and so the world of Labour turns upon its axis as unchangeable in its motion as the earth itself.

It may be that the earth, and therefore the Labour movement which covers it, is not intended to be other than a school for imperfect souls; that neither perfection nor its corollary 'consciousness' is to be achieved upon this plane; but it is to the

everlasting credit of the Socialist and Labour movement that it has always had and perhaps always will have a tiny minority of deathless spirits who refuse to admit it, and who still set their faces towards the Unknown Goal.

However that may be, the point which is being made here is that the goals of the various sections of labour and socialism, as their tactics, are different. Tactics in the Socialist movement have been largely determined by the attitude of the different socialist bodies to what is known as 'the Class War.'

With the exception of Great Britain, and even there not excepting the Social Democratic Federation and the Communists, the socialist movements of the world largely base their struggle upon belief in the class war of Karl Marx. Put simply, the theory of the class war is the theory that men are primarily divided by classes, and these classes divided by economic considerations into the 'Haves' and the 'Have nots;' in other words, into the working-class and the others.

The Communists or Bolsheviks, as the S.D.F. before them, regard the doctrine of 'the class war' exactly as some theologians the doctrine of predestination, that is, as beyond argument, and, incidentally, the Christian dogmatist is not alone in the possession of an Athanasian Creed. The Socialist movement has taken over 'the bell, book, and candle' of some of the Christian hierarchies; it has only changed the names and the forms.

The Independent Labour Party, on the other hand, as indeed when they bother themselves to

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

think about it, the great mass of the Trades Unionists, deny the dogma of 'the class war,' and are accordingly regarded by their continental brethren as 'heretics.' I am not sure that excellently intentioned gentlemen like Plechanov, the Russian Marxist, and his countrymen, Messrs Lenin and Trotzky, who hate him like the devil, with one or two of the same type in England, would not cheerfully send the deniers of the class war to the stake with as little compunction and as entire sense of conviction as their prototypes, Torquemada and Queen Mary.

Of course the I.L.P. with its usual excellent judgment of 'how much the other fellow will stand,' has always skated quickly over the thin ice of the class war in the International Socialist Congresses, and even at times has given a very fair colour to the assumption that their non-belief was due rather to lack of knowledge than to original sin. Indeed, one of the most bloodthirsty speeches on 'class-war' lines to which I have ever listened was that delivered by a prominent and professed pacifist leader of the I.L.P. to a vast audience in a certain city of Central Europe, drawing from them universal approbation. When this gentleman came down from the platform, he asked me, still dazed and wondering whether my hearing had not suddenly become affected, 'How I thought it had gone?'

Some of the socialist leaders, very like their deadly parallels in the other political parties, have a salamander-like quality of changing colour according to environment, forming excellent

illustrations of 'Marx's economic determination.'

Once you admit 'the class war' you are at once more or less committed to political and industrial tactics of 'war to the knife.' So long as the working-class is regarded as an oppressed class, yearning for freedom, standing together homogeneously face to face with its oppressors, presumably the leisured and professional classes, so long are you committed to a policy of revolution rather than evolution.

Deny 'the class war,' and instantly all mankind becomes more or less one, something like the animals in the Ark, some of them carnivorous, some of them herbivorous, but all afloat at the mercy of common circumstance. So will logically follow policies of 'arrangements,' of 'reform,' of 'understandings' and 'alliances.'

But in either case, the policies and their advocates are at loggerheads. And it is this difference of tactics which with the other differences mentioned is doing its work of disruption inside the labour ranks, which, however, will probably mask itself by compromise and patching up until Demos comes to power, when, like some hidden plague, after 'success' and 'power' have laid bare the weakness of a party without consciousness or ideals, it will break out to disrupt and to rot.

That is why one section of the Labour Party stands for evolution by parliament and the vote and another section for revolution and the strike. That is why the Labour Party which has nominally refused admission to the Communists at the

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Brighton Conference will be plagued by them as individuals inside the party as Pharoah was plagued by the seven plagues, and that is why the modern Children of Israel who stand for direct action and who have frankly declared: 'We are out to split the Party,' will one day find their Moses, who will lead them out of 'the house of bondage' towards the Promised Land, which, incidentally, will remain just a land of promise.

XIII

PRESS AND PROPAGANDA

BRITISH Labour is only able to support one Labour daily, and that much, as the Scotsman joked, 'wi' deeficulty.' Germany, even so far back as 1907, had eighty-four labour and socialist papers, many of them dailies. Even little Denmark, with a population of three millions, had and has some dozens of papers, quite a number of them dailies, and Japan at one time had some fifteen Socialist papers. In that, for those who can read, lies the story of British Labour.

Of course, there are to-day many Socialist and Labour periodicals in existence, some of them excellent of their type, from papers like *The New Age* to others like *Foreign Affairs* and *The Socialist Review*, but they reach only a tiny section of the public.

Those of us who have been behind the scenes of Labour papers, know something of the almost insuperable difficulties with which the Labour journalist has to contend, particularly that insuperable difficulty—the British working man.

One of the first Socialist papers, and perhaps, except *Justice*, the oldest, was the *Clarion*, still in existence, of which Robert Blatchford was the founder in 1891 and of which he is still the editor.

One day Robert Blatchford ('Nunquam') told

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

me the story of the *Clarion*, of how, greatly daring, Alexander M. Thompson (then 'Dangle,' now the capable Labour correspondent of the *Daily Mail*), Fay ('the Bounder'), and himself, took their courage and their fortunes in their hands (both Blatchford and Thompson were at that time highly paid journalists upon a big northern newspaper) and launched the little *Clarion*, destined to do more permeation of England for Socialism than any socialist paper that has followed it. It has been said, with some justice, that 'there is more floating socialism in England than in any other country in the world,' but if that be so it is largely due to the old *Clarion*, of which even to-day its old readers, many of whom have found themselves polaric to Robert Blatchford in his later 'militarist' evolution, speak with warm personal affection.

The *Clarion*, like *Justice*, the organ of the S.D.F., and the *Labour Leader*, the organ of the I.L.P., is a weekly. Its circulation stood for a long period before the war at about 60,000, reached after nearly twenty years' hard labour, but because it was so often quoted in the pulpit and in the columns of the capitalist press, it had an influence quite outside its sales. But the *Clarion*, I believe I am correct in saying, never was a paying proposition, and even when it was at its zenith its editor once confessed to me that neither he nor his colleague, the sub-editor, Mr Alexander Thompson, could live were it not for their journalistic contributions to the big papers outside.

As Mr Blatchford, perhaps the greatest writer

of simple English living to-day, whose pen has been compared to that of Bunyan and Cobbett, at the end of his first year as a professional journalist was receiving £1,000 a year, and as at any time he could have earned great sums as a writer to capitalist papers, it will be seen how substantial was his sacrifice to the cause in which he believed. Further, he was always ready to extend a helping hand to adventurous youth, and the writer at least would be the most ungrateful of men if he did not acknowledge his debt to the man who took him out of the City Jungle, in which as secretary and director of public companies he preyed and was preyed upon! and made him acting editor of *Women Folk*, that interesting little socialist weekly which, after stupendous efforts (I know I once started an entirely fictitious correspondence upon maternity by writing a letter for appearance in its columns, which I signed: 'A Mother of Five') was forced from twenty up to some thirty thousand odd weekly, but which had to be shut down after a year's run owing to the heavy losses.

To save it, we even called in the circulation specialist of a famous 'million' daily, who, however, finally declared it to be beyond the power of any specialist on earth to make the British working-class buy its own papers.

Women Folk is an interesting example of the foes, not only those without but within, with which the socialist and labour editor has to contend. Originally called the *Woman Worker*, with a very small circulation, and edited by a well-known woman leader of the I.L.P., *Women Folk*, upon

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

its passing into the hands of the *Clarion* people, was steadily boycotted by the I.L.P. branches, and I can recall the embittered remarks of the lady who had originally edited the paper. One cannot altogether blame the I.L.P. It had its own organ to push, but apart from this, there was that secret internecine warfare and jealousy between the different section leaders which has killed so many promising ventures in the socialist movement, and to which we fell victim.

The matter is only alluded to here because there had always been a strange and persistent doubt of the *Clarion* movement on the part of the I.L.P., in spite of the fact that Robert Blatchford had helped to found the Independent Labour Party, and, with it, the Labour Party. The whole story of the bitter divisions of the Labour movement, even from the earliest years, was shown in the 'Coming-of-Age' number of the *Clarion* in 1912, which number was really its swan song. Robert Blatchford then wrote: 'I believe the leaders of the Labour Party have committed a terrible blunder and have done the cause of Socialism more harm in the last few years than the Liberals and Tories could have done in a century.'

Justice may have had a weekly circulation of twenty thousand, and the *Labour Leader* one of fifty to sixty thousand. But the fact remains that all the socialist weeklies in Great Britain probably never had a combined circulation of a quarter of a million, and this in a country with 45 millions of people.

The first Labour daily was the *Daily Citizen*,

in which I, like thousands of others who saw in it a potential rival to the great capitalist dailies, was a shareholder and for which I acted for a time as foreign correspondent. The advent of the *Citizen* was hailed with acclamation by all sections of Labour, which from that moment quite consistently failed to take it.

Mr Frank Dilnot, former editor of *The Globe*, came from the *Daily Mail* to edit the paper, and despite heroic efforts by him and by his staff, the paper never at any time achieved a circulation of more than 250,000. 'Appeals' of all kinds were issued to the trades unions, which, in the way that they have, at one time raised enormous subsidies to keep going the paper which as individuals they refused to buy—but ultimately the *Daily Citizen* went the way of all flesh and of so many other Labour papers and 'was not.'

It was followed by the *Daily Herald*, formerly the weekly *Herald*. The fight of this solitary and raucous eagle of revolt, edited by the mildest Bolshevik that ever damned a capitalist, for existence is too well known to need recapitulation, one of the London dailies stating that at one time it was losing over one thousand pounds a week, although at one time, in 1920, under what the *Herald* would call 'the splendid spur of the Strike,' Demos discovered a temporary affection for the paper which so loyally backed him, paying his 'tuppences' to the tune of over three hundred thousand a day—only, when the strike was past and the froth had fallen away, to fall away himself. One of its former editors told me the story of that fight, a fight which

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

is still continuing, and it is the record of a gamble with fate from day to day, of peculiar self-sacrifice upon the part of editor and staff, and, let it be said, in its earlier years, of differences bitter and prolonged, according to the statement made to me by an ex-editor. Many days it was a toss-up whether the paper would appear the next morning, and I think it is an open secret that without generous and continuous subsidies at certain stages of its existence, the *Daily Herald* would have joined the great majority of Socialist and Labour papers. At any rate its views are anathema to the parliamentary leaders, by whose side its editor once uneasily sat, who curse it in private, what time the Labour branches push it in public.

The significance of all this has been overlooked not only inside but outside the labour movement. When all is said and done, the real test of a man's sincerity, of his devotion, and of his conviction, is the pocket test. The man who will not put his hand in his pocket for a penny or twopence a day to support the paper which is championing his cause, and because, unlike the ordinary trade union contribution, it shows no immediate *quid pro quo*, is not likely to stand the test of greater stresses.

It is a fact that the British worker, with rare exceptions, will not put his hand in his pocket for the penny or 'tuppence' necessary for his daily paper. It is a fact that the average member of the Labour Party prefers in nine cases out of ten to buy the papers which are directly or secretly opposed to the party of which he is a member than to buy his own paper.

Further than that, even some of the Labour papers have to resort to all kinds of ignoble shifts to keep the wolf from the door. Their columns bristle with pitiful appeals to the hearts and pockets of their readers. The hat is always being sent round.

And now we find one prominent labour paper, edited and partly, I believe, controlled by a deeply religious and entirely genuine man, reduced to the straits of giving racing 'selections' upon its posters. In doing so it is admitting, however unconsciously, the fact that the ordinary trades unionist is more interested in betting and sport than in Labour. Nor have I the slightest doubt that, other things being equal, the average organised worker would follow any paper, however anti-labour, which gave him the winner of the Derby or the Oaks in preference to a Labour paper written by archangels and edited by seraphim which was weak on the side of 'tips.'

We have at any rate seen the argument used by a Labour man as an excellent reason for the working man to support a certain Labour paper, 'that it had a knack of picking the winner.' No wonder the *Labour Leader* has recently written: 'So long as Trade Union members attend cricket and football matches in thousands and are content to attend Union meetings in dozens, almost any leader, no matter how bad, is too good.' When the thousands of working men who went to see 'Spion Kop' win the 1920 Derby saw facing them at Tattenham Corner the blatant announcement by a certain Labour organ that 'Tweedledum'

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

always spotted the winners, one can understand the ribald jeer of an obviously blue-blooded sportsman, who, catching sight of it, exclaimed with satisfaction: 'That's the stuff to give 'em!' Unfortunately it is the stuff.

At one time it was the boast of the labour movement that its papers told 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' and that they 'always came into court with clean hands.' How far can that be said to-day?

Quite apart from examples like the notorious case of a certain labour paper which, some years ago, knowing a certain strike to be a dead failure, still permitted its first edition to go out splashed with the news of a triumphant opening, is it not a fact that it has more and more become the habit of the labour papers, like some of the papers of their opponents, to suppress unpleasant facts or, in order to gain temporary advantage, to use that subtler and more dangerous form of deception known to the lawyers as *suppressio veri*, or the half-truth? From that to the *suggestio falsi* is but a step. The labour papers no longer all 'come into court with clean hands.'

The reason of the failure of Labour papers, apart from the human factor mentioned, is to be found in certain financial considerations. In the first place, such papers are largely boycotted by the advertiser, partly from political feeling and partly because the subscribers to such papers are not regarded as having a high potential purchasing power. Papers live by their advertisements, rather than by their subscriptions, although advertisements

largely depend upon circulation. So it is that by reason of their politics and their small circulations, the Labour papers suffer.

Another reason lies in the unattractive 'make-up' of the average labour organ, whether daily or weekly, and this in its turn largely springs from the fact that professional journalists, of whom, in London at least, perhaps a majority are labour and socialist sympathisers, are ignored by the average labour editor, who is usually notoriously ignorant of the technique of journalism. Papers like the *Labour Leader* have, in later times, made an attempt to secure something like an attractive make-up, but as a rule the appearance of the labour paper, daily or otherwise, is appalling. The comparative success of the *Clarion* was due to the fact that it had professionals behind it, but the Labour movement as a whole has yet to learn that as much technical knowledge is involved in the getting out of a daily or weekly as in the building of a house or the playing of the fiddle. One could instance a string of labour and socialist papers which have been edited by men who could not earn a pound a week in 'free-lance' Fleet Street. Here, as in so many other things, it is Labour's fatal sentimentalism and lack of grip upon essentials which keeps such men in their jobs, as it has kept the incapable trade union leader in his.

Something else that largely stultifies the Labour press propaganda is the divided counsels which so often show themselves not only in its different organs but even in parallel columns of the same paper. Thus, we have seen over a long period

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the columns of a certain prominent labour weekly with parallel columns giving both veiled approval and whole-hearted damnation to Bolshevism. 'If the trumpets give an uncertain sound . . .'

It was in the same paper that five of the eight pages of a certain issue contained angry recriminations between different sections of the Labour movement upon policy, not an uncommon feature!

The press offers Labour its finest platform, and Labour makes little use of it. Mr Ben H. Shaw, the Scottish Secretary of the Labour Party, has written: 'Every public newspaper should be compulsorily conscripted into service. . . .' and the Labour Party Press Department, aided by their Research Department, has made some attempt at this—but so far with comparatively small result, even if with much effort. We have even seen a London Capitalist daily, during one of the trade disputes, offer a substantial space each day for the putting of Labour's case, and have seen the miserable response. Yet even so small a body as the London Clarion Scouts at one time ran a 'Press Circle' under the guidance of a London editor and another professional journalist, which secured each week the insertion of numerous letters and articles putting the case for Labour and Socialism.

To assert, as is so often done, that letters and articles putting the labour side are rigorously barred from the capitalist press is simply not true. What is true is that contributions, lifeless and dogmatic, as are the vast mass of Labour contributions, as those of us know who have been behind the scenes of London dailies, are barred

and rightly so. The capitalist press will not go out of its way to put the case of labour and will fight that case where possible, but it will not, on the other hand, refuse really interesting contributions whether they are for or against labour.

Some day, when the Labour Party has left its present stage and occupied that newer stage which is gradually being prepared for its reception, it is not without the scheme of things entire, as the writer ventured to prophesy so long ago as 1914, that we shall yet see the *Daily Mail* the organ of Conservative Democracy, and, however far-fetched such prognostication may seem to men who never see much farther than their own noses, Lord Northcliffe himself the first Labour Premier.

Labour would then at least have the strange experience of being led by an idealist, whether one agrees with his ideals or not—and the writer, at least, would scarcely find himself in agreement with many of them—a man who would literally yield his last halfpenny and his last ounce of effort for the sake of what he conceives to be those ideals. For Labour to be led in our times by a whole-souled captain would be perhaps a novel and revivifying experience, and, in addition, it would have the advantage of learning the art of propaganda from the world's greatest Propagandist, as the war proved . . . though whether that propaganda would lead into Democracy's New Jerusalem is another matter entirely.

The artistic standard of the average labour paper is still very low. Efforts have frequently been made by enthusiastic young socialist artists

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

to induce a certain labour paper to set aside even a single column each week for book reviews, etc., but without result. The *Daily Herald* in this stands out as an exception, having at regular intervals an excellent column or two of book reviews. But its heavy indifference to art in any form is still unfortunately a characteristic of the movement which has produced some of the greatest writers and artists, such as Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, William Morris, Walter Crane, and many others.

One of the world's greatest living cartoonists to-day is possibly Will Dyson, the Australian, whose black and white has a power denied to almost any other artist of his type. The relegation of his cartoons by a certain labour paper to the strait jacket of column or two-column widths whilst giving full prominence to the work of other artists of the 'popular' type, excellent in its own way, is typical of the manner in which the labour movement treats its artists not only of the pen and brush, but its musicians and others.

The movement that is without music is without inspiration.

Here again the Labour movement is strangely lacking. The finest propaganda in the world is the propaganda by music, as indeed the finest propagandist is always the artist. Repeated attempts have been made to get together Labour bands, but without success; the dreadful bands which used to head our unemployed and other demonstrations, with their dirty, unpolished instruments and uncertain ideas both as to tempo and

150

harmony making a music that might have been that of the damned—as they certainly were. ‘Choirs’ of a sort we had many, although I remember Bernard Shaw putting his foot down by refusing to speak at one of our demonstrations ‘if your musicians first make my audience mad.’

Of course one must except some of the Welsh and Yorkshire choirs of the *Clarion* type, but these were very rare birds indeed. As a whole, our movement from the standpoint of art was of a dull gray, without music and without the inspiration which music brings.

I know that listening to the singing of ‘The Red Flag’ at an Albert Hall or Queen’s Hall demonstration I have sometimes had the very foundations of my faith shaken. We sang it like a dirge, and knowing its revolutionary author, Jim Connell, whose red tie still splashes the grays of Fleet Street, I am convinced that when he composed this Britain’s anthem of revolt, of which he once wrote in the columns of the *Clarion* that he was more proud of having composed it than anything its Editor, who hated the song, had ever written! he never postulated such rendering. Morris’s ‘England Arise!’ which we reserved for our larger demonstrations, we sang as if we were doing our best to put England to sleep, or at least that portion in front of us, and it must be said we often succeeded. (Incidentally, ‘The Internationale,’ the anthem of International Socialism, is itself a ghastly lilt.)

Let us admit it. The artist to the British labour

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

movement in the mass, although not to the Continental movements, is if not a 'rare' at least a 'queer' bird. It may be, as one of the most highly gifted of the labour leaders recently wrote to me, that 'much of this is due to the low intellectual standard' of portions of the movement, but the writer at least believes it to be due to something deeper, more inimical. It is due to the lack of inspiration of the modern movement and its big battalions. It is due to that self-satisfaction and, as a Labour M.P. confessed to me one day at the House of Commons, 'to that smug consciousness of virtue' which has come to distinguish the more 'precious' Labour and Socialist circles. But whatever it is, it accentuates the chasm which separates the modern movement from the movement of the pioneers, so many of them artists.

The most vital accusation that can be levelled against either man or movement is that he or it is insensible to the artist and his message. The response, conscious or unconscious, to art is the touchstone of all advance, from the humblest to the highest, for the artist is the interpreter of the spirit behind.

The mass of the labour leaders as the mass of their followers to-day, as is demonstrated by their press and propaganda, have as little conception of the significance of the artist as has the dweller in a London slum of the significance of the Song of Solomon. What the average labour leader as the average rank and file wants is the 'safe' man—the moderate man, the man he can 'understand,' that is, the man who doesn't make him think. The

Press and Propaganda

movement to-day wants men who can talk platitudes, evolutionary or revolutionary, from the platform, not men who paint pictures or who dream dreams. They don't want to be made 'uncomfortable,' which incidentally is one of the first concerns of the artist, nor do they want the artist propagandist, whether painter, writer, or speaker, who drags them from the hog-trough of votes and resolutions, in which they wallow, to show them something of the vision of life.

If, in the mystery of the ways divine, England ever passes under the heavy control of a Labour bureaucracy which despises art and the artist, or, what is worse, is heavily indifferent, then God help England!

XIV

THE FOOLS' PARADISE

TAKING a bird's eye view of what has gone before, and admitting, generally, the substantial accuracy of its representation of the Labour movement to-day, we are faced with the fact that Labour is living in a fools' paradise.

Nor can one exempt any section of the movement, socialist or labour, from the accusation.

We are faced with the fact of 'the Brain of Labour,' that is, the Independent Labour Party, tied to a rotting body which it despises at heart and by which it is despised, dragged at the heels of political wire-pulling in the mud of politics, finally wasting itself in futility, hoping all the time that some miracle is going to be performed by which the Labour movement will become a sort of glorified I.L.P. and a very new heaven be developed upon a very old earth.

We see the I.L.P. for all its idealism and splendid accomplishment, in its particular fools' paradise, as portrayed in the columns of the *Labour Leader*, a portrayal sometimes to move the onlooker to laughter and tears. Week after week, for more than a decade, we have seen the columns of this paper full of the most pious aspirations for the better behaviour and becoming of the Labour leaders and of the Labour Party. We have seen the I.L.P.,

hoping against hope that some day these leaders would show some ordinary inspiration and become 'good boys,' praising them for the most ordinary actions, and bearing, it must be admitted, the hell of their good intentions with Christian fortitude. If the Party in parliament, which it is sometimes hinted prefers the smoking room to the House itself and the glamour of great demonstrations to the spade work of voting, turns up fifty strong upon some bill of paramount importance to Labour, the *Leader* goes into modified hysterics of admiration. When, as so frequently happens, a mere handful of labour men turn up to vote upon some labour question, they are reprovèd as 'naughty boys' who really some day must learn to do better. Sometimes even, under excessive exacerbation, the I.L.P. puts them in the corner of its disapproval, at which the 'naughty boys' put their tongues out . . . and go on precisely as before.

The I.L.P., for all its intelligence and the inspiration that is not entirely dead, is drugged, or rather drugs itself by words and phrases exactly as the last newcomer to the Labour movement is drugged, and as we all have been drugged. When it speaks of the 'magnificent spirit' or the 'powerful speech' of so and so or so and so; when it uses the time-worn phrases of 'liberty' and 'brotherhood' and above all that word so damnably misused in our days—'democracy,' it is simply anæsthetising itself with the words and phrases which have always anæsthetised those who live in fools' paradises—especially those who live in the paradise of modern democracy.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

When Mr Arthur Henderson sings 'The Red Flag' at a Labour Party Conference, it records the fact with secret relish, because, in some dim way, it may mean that Mr Henderson, in a fit of democratic delirium, may to-morrow morning, or at most the day after, run out into the streets, a red flag in his hand, 'mit noddings on,' eating ravenously of the locusts and wild honey of the inspired pioneer. When Mr Blank, one of the 'labour shellbacks,' who has for many years distinguished himself by amiable mediocrity and a contempt for I.L.P. socialism, in the House of Commons makes a statesmanlike pronouncement, with an unwonted dash of ginger in it, in other words, fails most unusually to make an ass of himself, the I.L.P. believes that at last the erring brother has 'seen the light,' only to find the next day that the light he has seen has been 'the red light,' and that tortoise-like he has withdrawn his hard and horny head back into the impenetrable armour of his 'labour' shell.

When the I.L.P. M.P.'s in the Parliamentary Labour Party come down to the I.L.P. conferences to complain of the lack of inspiration of their colleagues, against whom they sometimes hurl 'unstatesmanlike' denunciations and whom they criticise mercilessly... in the conference, the I.L.P. is profoundly moved—'really, something must be done'... and then passes on to the next resolution.

Some day—some day in the dim and distant future, the I.L.P. visualises the fools' paradise of a parliament in which Mr George Lansbury, who thinks he thinks he is a Bolshevik; Mr Arthur

156

Henderson, the benevolent radical, who thinks he has 'got religion,' the religion of Socialism; Mr G. H. Roberts, M.P., who has 'fallen away from grace;' Mr Philip Snowden, the surgeon of the socialist movement; Mr Ramsay MacDonald, who, despite his intellectual equipment, is as far removed from Mr Snowden in temperament, sympathies, and even goal, as are Lenin and Trotzky from their Russian *muzhiks*; the Reverend Conrad Noel, Sinn Feiner and revolutionary high churchman; the Reverend J. H. Campbell, his antithesis, who once saw 'the socialist light,' but is now absorbed in the bosom of holy church; Mr 'Jack' Jones, who fears neither God nor devil; and Heaven alone knows what other flotsam and jetsam thrown up by 'the movement'—will all sit together in brotherly harmony. That they leave out Mr H. M. Hyndman, the leaders of the Communists, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, is only due to the fact that even the capacious bosom of the I.L.P. has its limits of absorption.

Then the Communists, who, officially excluded from the Labour Party as a body, still, like the parasite of 'Yellow Jack,' remain inside it dormant but waiting their chance to pestilently consume it—they also live in their own fools' paradise.

They foresee the day, and even believe that comrade Lenin himself still believes in its advent, although comrade Lenin has long since given up the belief, when the Red Flag will wave triumphant over the Tower of London, and the Tower itself be turned into a Communist dungeon for those socialists who do not see eye to eye with those of

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the true faith. They foresee the day, not when the lion will lie down with the lamb, but when the Henderson and Clynes and Thomas lambs have been eaten up comfortably by their brother-lions of the Communist Party, and when the last M.P. will have been hurled into the dirty bosom of Father Thames as it flows under the walls of the House of Commons, which will then be a Communist Cathedral, whilst the Abbey over the way will have been converted into a dancing saloon, and St Paul's into a meeting-place for dishevelled democracy.

They foresee the day, 'not far distant as time flies,' as one of them recently expressed it, when the British Trades Unionist, Europe's first pacifist, to-day hating violence as Satan hates the water of holiness, will have been transformed into a deuce of a fellow, with a tendency to barricades and bombs, and of a 'clean cut class consciousness' in comparison with which even Karl Marx would be as a straw diamond to the genuine article.

In their fools' paradise they in imagination have covered England with Soviets, not 'Working men's and Soldiers' Councils,' for there will be no soldiers—perhaps no 'working men'—the British working man, of course, always having shown a startling tendency to 'conscientious objection,' especially during the Great War, when those Welsh miners, now the fire-eating direct actionists of British Labour, lay all night in the streets of Cardiff to enroll against their dearly beloved brethren of Germany! In other words, England will be covered with groups of 'workers' who,

158

like their prototypes in Russia, will debate the 'pros and cons' of each day's work before they do it, and will finish in their own fools' paradise—the paradise of the anarchist, where the individual is supreme and much better than any of his fellows, as indeed is the way of all madhouses.

But by that time, as of course every good Communist knows, the world will be Bolshevik. 'Fraternal greetings' will have been sent by 'wireless' from Paris to New York and from Berlin to London, with Tokio, Peking, and Calcutta thrown in as make-weights—because, as every good Communist also knows, although Lenin doesn't, the bolshevik propaganda is 'running like wild-fire' through the dusky millions of India, China, and Japan. In other words, they are hoping that by that time the world will have been transmogrified into a lunatic asylum of four dimensions.

And then, our third group of British Labour—the placid, gelatinous mass of the Trade Unionists—what is the fools' paradise in which they are living?

That at least is plain for all to see. Democracy with a capital 'D,' headed by the Labour leaders, is going to march on from strength to strength. It is all so simple!

Democracy, organised into its Unions, to-day at one another's throats, the leaders of which politely but firmly refuse to get out of one another's way, is going to gather votes, and then more votes, and then still more. Democracy is going a vote gathering. It is going to place the future not only of England but of the world upon the holding up of hands. Damn

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

brains! Damn intelligence! Damn thinking! And, above all, damn, thrice, trebly damn minorities.

The Great Majority, with the dead weight of its votes, is going to roll out all opposition. If an individual gets in its way, go over him. If a party gets in its way, go over the party. If the artist or the thinker or the man who still has some belief in individual freedom gets in its way—why, go over him! It is all so simple.

Quantity is the thing. Not quality.

‘The divine right of the Majority’ is to replace ‘the divine right of Kings.’

The ‘democrat’ is to replace the ‘autocrat.’ The great thing, the thing that matters is that he will call his autocracy, ‘democracy.’ The label’s the thing.

And so this great indifferent army of the third group, the indifferent millions who form the body if not the backbone of Labour, is to march from victory to victory—simply by the power of the vote. Not by thinking—although the leaders will still continue to talk about ‘thinking;’ not by education, although the word is and will be always in their mouths; not by that spiritual intuition which comes from self-sacrifice and self-control, although the blind, leaders of the blind, will, like second Pied Pipers in the death-dance of democracy, play their children to the end inevitable to the sound of a Carmagnole that will be a psalm; but, just by the vote.

In some unimagined way, there is to be more and still more money for less and still less work. ‘Ca’ canny’ is to be driven to its logical objective—the

The Fools' Paradise

objective of doing no work at all—but still wages are to be kept up. Men are to be taught that 'responsibility' is but a word, but that 'privilege' is everything—and under this teaching of 'privilege without responsibility' they are to develop character and happiness.

There will be elections. And then more elections, in this paradise of fools. There will be the passing of resolutions and giant demonstrations. There will be a waving of flags and much speech-making. And there will always be voting.

And at last, out of all this, the Labour State is to evolve not only for the third group but for their friends the I.L.P'ers and the Communists. But what that 'State' is to be none of them have ever taken the trouble to consider, and all that can be said of it is that 'its last state is likely to be worse than its first.'

But the worst that one can wish to the imaginers of this Paradise of Fools is that one day it may be realised.

In the world as it will then be, that world which will be a fools' paradise, 'Country,' like nationhood, will pale its ineffectual fires in the crimson bale of rising Internationalism. Men will have forgotten that they are Englishmen or Frenchmen or Irishmen or Indians, and will only remember that they are Internationalist.

But soft, my masters. For the paradise of fools will have its serpents as it will have its Guardian, the flaming sword of fact in his hand, flashing it before the eyes of those who hate it.

There will be the fact of a Party hopelessly

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

divided within itself in everything that makes for unity. There will be the fact of a still ignorant and uneducated Democracy. There will be the fact that, despite all theories, the individual is still the unit of progress. There will be the fact that men and women differ as much in their development and achievement to-day in these days of democratic 'equality' as they have ever done—and, that other unpleasant fact, that the more the world develops, as in the physiological parallel of the body, the more individualised and complex become its functions and organs. There is the fact of 'heredity,' which the Labour movement simply ignores but which still plays a formulative though not the deciding part in human destiny. And there is that ultimate fact, referred to before, which is only just beginning to dawn hazily upon the intelligence of some of the thinkers of Labour, that men and women are not separated so much by class, or by economic position, as by differences of goal and spiritual objective.

Now, as always, the men and women of imagination will lead not only the Labour Party but the world. And it is these men and women who will one day disrupt this disunity that is called 'labour,' will tear off the mask of its 'democracy,' and will leave this sepulchre of dead hopes as a spirit leaves a tomb.

That day is not yet, but it is coming.

XV

LABOUR AND WAR

THE rising democracy is to-day being faced with certain main problems. Amongst the problems which it will have to decide may be mentioned the attitude which Labour is to adopt to war and armaments; its attitude to 'country;' its definite views on empire; and, finally, for it will have to face this problem now—what is to be its position in regard to 'the idea of God.'

If the debates in the House of Commons upon armaments be read; or the speeches of labour leaders throughout the country, not only at the beginning of the war of 1914 but for many years before, be taken, or the columns of the labour press be examined, it will be seen, beyond equivocation, how systematically Labour has side-stepped all these and other problems upon which the whole future of society turns.

Of course the dilettanti, as the 'intellectuals,' have, in the obscure pages of some socialist or labour review or within the holy of holies of their meeting houses, as in what are aptly termed 'full dress' debates, like that upon Foreign Policy at the 1921 Labour Party Conference, discussed these subjects—almost invariably although not always, vaguely; but the point which is here made is that the labour movement, as a whole, has never,

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

either in parliament or out of it, stated definitely its views upon armaments and home and imperial defence generally, any more than it has decided its orientation to religion, or, as I have preferred to call it, 'the idea of God.' The result has been that, however clear individual leaders may be upon these points, the average Trade Unionist is still without any clearer or more definite view upon these questions, and perhaps excepting the last, about which he may have his private view, than he has upon the differential calculus. And all this goes for the world movement as well as the British.

The vagaries of British Labour itself upon these points is but the reflex of that vagueness of the International Socialist Congresses, with their eternal 'majority' and 'minority' reports upon war and armaments as upon 'country.'

'Religion,' of course, was always relegated to the dustheap as being nobody's business but that of the individual, if he were fool enough to make it so.

To indicate how hopelessly divided are the Labour and Socialist parties of the world upon war and armaments, it is only necessary to take a bird's eye view of the attitude of these parties throughout Europe and America during the Great War.

The French Socialists just before the outbreak of war, said if France were attacked it would be impossible for the French Socialist Deputies to vote against the War Credits. On August 6th, 1914, they voted the War Credits.

The German Socialists, already on August 4th,

1914, whilst affirming that war had been declared against their will, felt bound to vote for the War Credits, only 14 voting against.

The Belgian Socialists, with Belgium invaded, very naturally voted their country's War Credits.

In Great Britain the movement was divided, but the great majority voted for participation in the war. This led to splits and differences in various sections. Throughout the British Dominions, especially in South Africa, where the Labour Party was split, the same strident differences were shown, whilst in Australia the Labour Party supported the war and the Independent Socialist bodies opposed it.

In the United States, in 1917, the Socialist bodies, generally speaking, opposed participation in the war, whilst the Trade Unions supported it.

In Italy, the official Socialist Party voted against war, whilst another group of Socialists were as strongly for it, demanding the wresting from Austria of all provinces where Italian was spoken.

The Socialists of Russia showed an extraordinarily complicated series of views and differences, some being for and some against war, whilst the Balkans were chaotic in their views.

The Socialist Parties of Greece, Roumania, and Poland stood for everything from strict neutrality to violent participation.

In Portugal alone were the Socialists unanimous, supporting their Government.

The Socialist Party of Austria became so involved that they could not make their position clear, although later they voted against the War

Credits. The Bohemian Socialists were also against voting for the War Credits, whilst the Hungarian Socialists were point blank opposed to war in any form.

To sum up, upon the most important problem with which humanity is faced to-day, the Socialist and Labour Parties of the world showed themselves without policy—cleft as no capitalist parties have ever been cleft.

What the British Labour Party, like all those other world parties, has done in congresses galore as in the House of Commons is to express itself as distinctly and amiably against all war—which, incidentally, is exactly the position of any Liberal or Conservative of them all. It has passed resolutions—what resolutions has it not passed!—declaring that war is wicked ; that the expenditure on armaments to-day is shameful; that people ought to love one another and presumably would love one another if it were not for wicked statesmen who sit up o' nights to make this love impossible.

But to declare definitely that it is in favour of or directly opposed to conscription of every means of defence at the British Empire's disposal for the protection and safe-guarding of an Empire from which at least it does not dissociate itself; that it advocates the whole-hearted support or the disbandment of the British army; that military training, whether of Boy Scout or of adult, is inspiring or abhorrent; and that it stands for immediate disarmament throughout the British Empire, or for arming that Empire to the teeth—none of this has it done.

The policy of the Imperialist who, believing in the British Empire, is determined to, if necessary, spend the last man and the last shilling in the defence of that empire, is understandable. The policy of the pacifist, opposed to physical force in any form and to the taking of human life, who says: 'Disarm and chance what comes!' is also understandable. They are both, each from its own side, watertight arguments. But the 'policy' of the Labour movement, afraid to advocate disarmament and afraid to advocate the strongest army and navy possible in the defence of an Empire in which it vaguely pretends to believe—that is a policy without logic and without force, one only to be despised by all whole-hearted men whether imperialist or pacifist.

The report upon the general policy of the Labour Party, adopted in a series of resolutions at the Conference held in June, 1918, is typical of the phrase-making and pious aspiration into which democracy has fallen. The general policy upon Imperialism, as set out in the *Labour Year Book*, is stated in the following words:—

'Upon the broader problems of political reconstruction, the Labour Party stands for a repudiation of the Imperialism which seeks to dominate other races and countries, and looks forward to an ever-increasing intercourse, a constantly developing exchange of commodities, a steadily growing mutual understanding, and a continually expanding friendly co-operation among all the peoples of the world. Not only does it demand Home Rule for Ireland immediately. It presses also for separate

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

legislative assemblies for Scotland, Wales, and even England.' . . .

From this it goes on to the trifle of the establishment of 'a universal League or Society of Nations . . . to settle their disputes with one another without resort to war,' and 'looks ultimately to the establishment of universal Free Trade as one of the ultimate safeguards of the world peace.'

Those phrases might have been taken word for word from almost any Chairman's address at any Trades Union Congress of the last ten years. They are the phrases and pious aspirations which have become stereotyped into the Labour consciousness until they are repeated with as little thought of their real meaning or of the possibility of their practical realisation as are the prayers which pour from the Thibetan prayer-wheel. They are phrases which have that quality of 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbal' of which St. Paul speaks.

What the Labour Party does not say is whether it is in favour of a strong and big Empire or whether it is against the principle of Empire. When it sends its representatives to India or the colonies, these representatives lose themselves also in phrase-making without any declaration of ultimate principles one way or the other. It is that fatal lack of policy, of concentration upon principle, which runs through modern Democracy, not only in Great Britain, but in all countries, and which causes its enthusiasm, its energy, and its efforts to peter out into the sands of compromise.

Not that the writer contends that compromise is not sometimes necessary, but there are certain

basic principles upon which neither party nor individual may compromise without losing identity and direction.

There is not the slightest indication as to how such epoch-making changes, desirable or undesirable—and here the writer is entirely unconcerned with the desirability or otherwise of any policy mentioned—are to be brought about, and the party policy ignores sublimely the root fact that ‘Demos doesn’t care a damn’ about ‘political reconstruction,’ but is still, because he is uneducated by his leaders, more interested in horse-racing or football than he is interested in the Empire of which he is supposed to be a part, and of which, frankly, he knows nothing and cares as little.

The Labour leaders, British or continental, like many children, want to eat their cake and have it. They make no declaration of policy in a definite sense because having always one eye upon principle and the other upon the voter, they have ceased to have principles. And principles and votes have little in common.

Some of the other parties may be no better, but we are not concerned with them in these pages.

Even so clear-headed a writer and Labour champion as Sir Leo Chiozza Money, recently writing upon the Labour attitude to expenditure upon armaments, etc., said: ‘It is greatly to the credit of the Labour Party that in all such matters it has taken the true view. Labour is sternly opposed to *real* waste. It sets its face against spending *vainly* on armaments, and the use of

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

armaments, whether in Ireland or Russia or elsewhere.' The italics are my own.

What is 'real' waste, and what 'unreal?' What is 'vain' expenditure and what 'worth-while' expenditure?

The passage is quoted, for it is so typical of Labour vagueness in such matters.

Take any speech you like out of the pages of *Hansard*, or go to one of the hundred and one anti-war demonstrations of the Labour Party, and you will find the above passage paralleled by the vague statement of the speakers. The Labour Party in this, as in so many other things, refuse to face the facts, because facing the facts means losing the votes.

The fact is, and the leaders know it, that Demos in the mass doesn't know anything about empire—nor is he particularly concerned for 'country,' save at high-pressure times of national stress, like that of the War, when the unconscious lessons of the centuries and the fact that nationhood is something vital, not accidental, as is the implied teaching of the Red International, forces the unconscious above the threshold of the conscious, where its lessons make themselves felt.

When a brigade of Boy Scouts, with drums beating and colours flying, marches past the headquarters of the Labour Party—what is the attitude of the gentlemen inside? Do they hold up their hands in pious horror at such juvenile depravity, or do they go all out and, swinging the Union Jack out of the windows, their eyes in fine frenzy, rolling, say: 'Splendid! That's the stuff to give

'em! These are our potential soldiers for the defence of empire. The soldier has to be caught and trained young. Good luck to them!'

As a matter of fact they do neither. Messrs Henderson and Thomas probably stick their hands in their pockets and turn away. Mr Ramsay MacDonald looks on with sardonic eye. And Mr John Hodges, his hands engulfed in his capacious cross-pockets, passes on to the next 'resolution.'

When the Great War broke out, we found the Labour Party divided not between two but twenty-two minds. After passing those contradictory resolutions in the early days to which reference has already been made, on the 7th of August, when the Party, with its usual superb inactivity, decided to make no pronouncement upon the Vote of Credit, Mr MacDonald resigned the chairmanship and Mr Arthur Henderson took his place.

The Independent Labour Party came out with a masterly ineptitude, which ended:—

'The war conflagration envelops Europe; up to the last moment we laboured to prevent the blaze. The nation must now watch for the first opportunity for effective intervention.' And then, skipping over the trifle of the war itself, it went on: 'As for the future, we must begin to prepare our minds for the difficult and dangerous complications that will arise at the conclusion of the war,' falling from that paragraph into a violently pious aspiration for the resistance by the workers of fresh wars, saying that 'throughout Europe the workers must press for frank and honest diplomatic

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

policies, controlled by themselves, for the suppression of militarism and the establishment of the United States of Europe' . . . and so on. Why 'the worker,' if he got to power, would in diplomacy be 'frank and honest' and why it is always assumed that Demos is but a sort of fallen angel, Labour and Lenin alone know. So far, Bolshevik diplomacy and practice at least have not justified any of these assumptions.

But this characteristic counsel of perfection, at least ended upon a note with nothing enigmatic in it: 'Out of the darkness and the depths, we hail our working-class comrades of every land. Across the roar of guns, we send sympathy and greeting to the German Socialists. . . . They are no enemies of ours but faithful friends. . . .'

It was of these 'faithful friends' that Bebel, a man of rare honesty, said long years before the war, that if it came to a fight every German Social Democrat would shoulder his rifle in defence of Fatherland, which indeed he did. And it was these 'faithful friends,' with a few honourable exceptions like Georg Ledebour, Marie Luxembour, and Karl Liebknecht, who justified the German occupation of Belgium, as being a case of 'military necessity.'

As a counterblast, came the manifesto of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, which was an appeal to the Trades Unionists of Great Britain sufficiently bellicose for any fire-eater on the Liberal or Tory benches. But, here again, with that fatal note of bargaining, of doubt, the appeal to the young men of the

working-class to roll up was made upon the lines that if they did not do so conscription would come!

In all its maze of resolutions, how rare is it to find the Labour politicals in the later years taking their stand upon principle as opposed to expediency!

Then, to show how deeply was Labour divided upon the question of armaments, came the various minority revolts inside the Labour Party, when accusations were hurled backwards and forwards across the floors of excited conferences, whilst the final touch was given by the coming of the conscientious objector, who, despite the general opinion to the contrary, and the anathemas bestowed upon him by some of his own comrades, was often a very genuine person indeed who would have found it much easier to go into khaki than to stand the moral obliquity which showered upon him from all directions. The I.L.P. itself was split into two distinct and antagonistic sections upon this very question of war and armaments—one section standing for the direct backing of England's intervention, and the other being against such intervention.

But quite apart from the question of losing votes, the Labour Party makes no definite pronouncement for or against national defence, because the men who profess to lead it are blissfully ignorant as to the 'psychological' as apart from the economic origin of wars, consistently underrate the force and meaning of patriotism, and themselves, with some exceptions, lack decided opinion upon

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

‘country.’ A very simple consideration will determine the facts.

Of the seventy odd members of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, how many stand out to-day as having conscious, definite and impassioned belief in nationality and nationhood, not only under the stimulus of war, when men are driven out of themselves, but in the intervals of peace? How many of these gentlemen realise even faintly that nationality is but ‘the larger individuality,’ and that the graving tool of evolution in our days is, just, ‘the nation?’ One will venture to say that not a third, possibly not a sixth, could be brought into such category.

These well-meaning gentlemen persistently regard wars as being *solely* the product of a few machiavellian imaginations driven by the lust for power and empire, as coming directly from the evil phantasy of the modern statesman, who, heaven knows, has plenty of it in his portfolio, and springing full-fledged from the brain of diplomacy as Athene sprang full-fledged and armed from the head of Jupiter. They persist in the assumption that the masses who vote them into office are the victims of the machinations of this handful of statesmen, statesmen whom at one and the same time they endow with the qualities of brain-softening and of all-powerful gods. And so long as they persist in their ignorant assumptions and their half-truths, so long will they plunge into contradictory war resolutions, so long will their International peace congresses be rendered nugatory, and so long will they awake from their

successive trances as each war treads upon the heel of the last.

They don't realise and apparently don't care that statesmen are made by the very democracy to which they pay lip service, that armies consist mainly of working men, beings of flesh and blood and brain, and not only of the blood-distended monstrous thoughts of ministers of war, and that the moment the proletariats of the world decide that there shall be no more war—in that moment war will cease. They still keep up this ignominious play-acting of deluded democracy and deluding despot, this farce of spider and fly. And if one knows them, they will still keep it up.

But when the drums once more begin to beat in Europe, and the guns begin to thunder, the British Labour leaders at least, and whatever the Continental Labour leaders may do, despite all their pretences of international brotherhood, despite their ostrich-like policy of refusing to face the facts of war, and even because they have so refused and in the refusing have given no lead to the workers—will once more discover that the masses of those workers at the tap of the drum will follow the flag as they have followed it before, will forget their parrot-lessons of an internationalism the idealist spirit of which they have never understood, and will once more tread the awful path to 'death or glory.'

They will discover that nationality is still stronger than a bastard internationalism which, originally rooted in idealism, has grown through words and phrases . . . and they will learn, if it

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

be possible for them to learn anything, that wars are not only questions of pounds, shillings and pence, but also questions of race, of ideal, of aspiration, with, behind them, the dark purposes of evolution itself.

The Pied Pipers of the world play and the children follow the Red Road of war. But if the children follow, it is not only because of the Pied Pipers of militarism but because of the Pied Pipers of pacifism.

XVI

NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

LABOUR has no policy on 'War.' Labour has no policy on 'Country.' It has no policy upon 'Empire.'

In other words, it is without policy upon the three most vital problems in the world to-day.

It is without such policy because it has never learnt to think clearly—perhaps because it has not felt deeply—upon the meaning of nationalism and internationalism. One could forgive it for its lack of science. One cannot forgive it for its lack of intuition.

To probe the reason for the inextricable tangle of thought into which it has come, one has to get at the origin or origins of the International idea.

In all stages of the world's history, both before Buddha and after Christ, great spirits have made their appearance upon this earth actuated by a profound pity for humanity and its sufferings. Saints and martyrs, heroes and hermits, have given life and effort to the solution of the problem of the world, which is the problem of suffering. Men of all religions and of no religion have loved and worked and died at their task.

The pioneers of the Internationalist movement in the '50's were men and women of this type. They were as much the legitimate if unconscious

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

successors of the Buddhas, the Christs, and the St Francis d'Assisis as these latter were of their predecessors. They, actuated also by a passion for humanity, believing they had staggered upon a new gospel of perfection, preached 'democracy' and 'internationalism' as the way out from the hell of human suffering, preached it out of a wealth of good intent. Their mistake was that they believed that filling the hungry belly also meant filling the hungry soul, whilst their successors have begun to forget the soul altogether.

With the natural anxiety of all Utopians to make the Utopian gospel one throughout the world in all ages, many of them claimed kinship with their great predecessors, some of them, for example, claiming Christ as 'the first Socialist,' and so on. The anarchists claimed him as 'an anarchist-communist.' The teachers of 'equality,' ignoring all that for their creed was unpleasant or inconvenient in his teachings, claimed that he also had taught 'equality.' The Internationalist claimed that he was internationalist. And so it was that there grew up a sort of Utopian tradition even amongst the materialist Utopians that 'equality' and 'internationalism' was the goal towards which all the great reformers of the ages had been aiming.

What none of the Utopian Internationalists saw was that not one of the great world teachers with whom they claimed kinship, where they did not repudiate them altogether! failed to teach, with the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the principle of what may be called 'spiritual

178

aristocracy.' Such teachers recognised implicitly the vast chasms which separate human beings in their spiritual development, and especially the fact that human beings are not separated by 'class' or by economic interests, of which, indeed, it is significant they scarcely ever spoke, so much as by differences of concept and goal.

These differences have been defined and segregated in the later stages of evolution by 'the nations' with their vitally differing temperaments and ideals. 'The nation' is but nature's larger focus of temperament and individuality, of which the individual is the smaller, and can no more be obliterated than the individual himself, behind which stands the impulse and play of the elemental forces of evolution. The *inter-national* rather than International society of the future will show itself, not as a dead level but as a mountain range, with peaks of extraordinarily varied heights and conformation, the whole, however, much more closely knit than is our society of to-day.

Now, the gospel of the Internationalist was that 'all human beings are equal,' or, to put it in the vernacular, 'as good as one another.' The assumption behind this was necessarily that neither race nor nation marked fundamental difference—certainly not temperament or outlook. Such elementary considerations as the chasms, physical, mental, and spiritual, separating the Australian aboriginal from the European thinker, for example, or to take another level, the Eastern Buddhist from the Western Christian, never gave the Internationalists pause, because, inflamed as they

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

were with the lust to make all men equal, hypnotised as they were by the word 'democracy,' they did what most people do—they believed what they wanted to believe. It is only fair, however, to say that this 'equality' was never taught in the sense that all men were exactly the same, having the same gifts and capacities as is often vulgarly supposed—only that the extraordinary differences in *spiritual quality* were never considered or admitted.

Ignoring as they did the profound psychological and other considerations which underlay the problem of nationality, they started half-way up, and seeing that wars were between nations, they reached the easy and to them obvious conclusion, that the first thing to do was to obliterate as far as possible nationality and replace it by internationalism.

It was only necessary to go out into the world and preach the new gospel of Internationalism, and all men, especially working men! would forget that they were Americans, or Englishmen, or Frenchmen, or Irishmen, or Germans, and would after a time become just 'International.'

Their first misconception was that Internationalism and Nationalism are the antitheses of, instead of being, as they are, the essentials each of the other. They contended, not unplausibly, that nationhood would lose its identity and sanctity in Inter-nationhood or Internationalism, and they conveniently forgot, if they ever remembered, that the family, for example, as the individual himself, lost neither its identity or sanctity when

it merged into the tribe, and, later, into the nation, but, on the contrary, gained in both as evolution did its work. They also, incidentally, forgot that so hard does nationality die even in new surroundings, that one of the problems of the modern statesmen in certain countries, and especially in the United States, is the problem of accentuated nationality resulting from the trek into the new country. 'Hyphenated nationality,' as it is sometimes called.

In fact, these international pioneers were trying to run internationally before they could walk nationally.

Men who have no love of country and no patriotism are of no use in the International Building to come. No man can be Internationalist before he is Nationalist. A man who has not learnt the cohesion of country is not likely to learn the greater cohesion of countries. The man who has not learnt to live and move and have his being through the soul of a nation is not going to do so through the International Soul.

But the Labour movement in all countries has been assuming that all these impossibilities are possible.

If anything could have torn the scales from the eyes of Demos and his leaders and so enabled them to see clearly the meaning of nationality, although upon its darker and more unconscious sides, it was the Great War. The International structure collapsed silently in a night as did the Campanile of Venice. On August 1st, 1914, the Labour movements of the various countries were still exchanging 'fraternal

greetings,' were still talking vaguely of 'internationalism' and 'democracy.' On August 31st, they were at one another's throats on the battle-fields of the Continent. The war has indeed shown that of all forces in the world to-day the force of nationality is still the strongest, although it is a force that, like all the mightier forces, sometimes takes terrible as well as beautiful forms.

Not that nationality and nationhood will always display itself upon the battlefield or that internationalism will always remain a vain dream, but, just as we find in all evolution of life upon the globe that advance and co-ordination has always led to more intense specialisation and differentiation of the parts co-ordinated, as in the human body, for instance, so we shall find that although it may take and will take new forms, nationhood, and the larger individuality that is nationhood, will show itself ever more highly specialised and differentiate, as indeed we shall see and are seeing in the case of the individual inside the nation itself.

But so far as International Labour is concerned, the point is whether its leaders are prepared to face the facts.

The facts they have to face are, first, that as all progress is first made through individuality and the individual, so, for the sake of the world, the larger individuality of the nation must be preserved at all costs. Secondly, that the progress to true international understanding can only be made by the conscious development of fuller nationhood. Lastly, they have to face the law of evolution which is 'the Law of the Ascending Spiral.'

This last is the law by which the human race, in its tortuous path upwards along this spiral seems always to come back over the same spot, but at a higher level. There is progress—but it is progress in which the same principle makes itself eternally apparent in different forms.

The Man of the Stone Age, for example, was the fundamental individualist, that is to say, the anarchist, his hand against every man, every man's hand against him. In the course of the ages he yielded to both a modification and enlargement of his individuality by absorption into the family, itself the direct ancestor of the nation; the family itself becoming more firmly established in the process, and now we see how the idea of the inter-nation is slowly evolving. Only, because the international idea of our times has sought to obliterate instead of to preserve individuality by obliterating the idea of the nation itself, which is the same thing as obliterating the individuality of those composing the nation, it is going to fail and, in fact, has already failed, as the War has shown.

Further, to take our argument another stage, we have seen how side by side with the growth of a false internationalism there has been the growth of the State Collectivist Principle. And now, both from this false international concept as from the tyranny of the mechanical collectivist State, man, in his path along the spiral, has, especially since the war, reacted in protest to a stronger individualism as he has done so many times before in his ascent along the spiral—reacted to the individualism of his ancestor of the Stone Age, but on an infinitely

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

higher level. It is the same individualist principle to which he has come back, but at a higher point of evolution.

This reaction in its turn will presumably yield to the Higher Collectivism and to a genuine Internationalism, both founded in a conscious individualism as in a conscious nationality, and both animated by that aristocracy of spirit which will replace the aristocracies of blood and of money which were its predecessors on the spiral path. The principle of the play is the same, it is only the players who change.

That the Labour movement, national or international, in its present form will learn these lessons and face these facts one cannot believe. What we are likely to see are fatuous and frequent attempts to build up new 'Red Internationals,' which at present spring up like mushrooms in the night. We are likely to see much holding of 'international' congresses and much passing of 'resolutions,' with a tactful sidestepping of questions of 'country' and 'empire' and similar unpleasant facts. From time to time, it will seem as though International Labour had reached some cohesion and some understanding upon these points, only, upon the tap of the drum, to be once more violently torn apart.

And here is the final fact.

The British worker is to-day more 'British' and less internationalist than he has ever been. The German worker is more 'German' and more anti-French. The French worker is more anti-German and more 'French.' Take any country

in the Old World and you will find that never before in the history of the earth has nationality become so accentuated even though, unhappily, it has not become more conscious and has in some cases become more reactionary.

When Mr H. G. Wells in his immensely stimulating *Salvaging of Civilisation* insists that the quick establishment of 'the World State of All Mankind' alone can prevent civilisation from perishing—he is asking for the impossible. When he speaks of the conception of a World State to supersede the crowd of independent struggling States of to-day, he is speaking of the absolutely unattainable. When he demands that our children shall be released from their national obsessions, he is simply demanding the incomprehensible.

These things are to-day impossible and unattainable and incomprehensible, for two reasons and two only: first, nationality is still the most powerful driving force in the world; and secondly, an International World State will only be possible when each unit composing it is that of a fully conscious nation, proud of its nationhood, and fully realising the significance of nationality, and all this, without taint of jingoism or that narrow patriotism which so often to-day passes for the larger, deeper nationalism.

When Mr Wells, who one rather suspects has never really understood the ultimate meaning of nationality, says that so far as 'national egotism' is concerned, the children 'are not born with it,' he is falling into the common pit of a common

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

error with the labour leaders to-day who, lacking vision, have as little understanding of the imaginative genius of a Wells, as they have of the labyrinth of the Milky Way, and who, incidentally, in the past have bitterly resented his entirely justified criticisms of the Labour movement. Nationality is not an accident—it is a gift, inherited through countless generations, and like all beautiful things, capable of terrible abuse.

Mr Wells, gifted dreamer though he be, like so many of the Utopian Internationalists, is crying for the moon. The World State will only come 'when democracy has been made safe for the world' and when Demos has risen from his belly to stand upright in the light of the morning as befits a son of the gods. To-day he is selling his god-like birthright for a mess of potage.

The day when the Labour leaders of the world learn themselves and teach to their followers that a true Internationalism can only be founded upon a *conscious* nationalism, when they teach them that nationality is really of extraordinary import, having nothing in common with the jingo patriotism with which it is so often confused, that day will see the beginning of the end of the wars of nations if for nothing else, then, because respect and understanding of the individuality of one's own nation will mean respect for and understanding of the individuality of other nations. It is always the ignorant strata, whether above or below, of a nation which are contemptuous of the rights and individuality of other nations, and this ignorance only has its parallel in the assumption of the

‘ Internationalist ’ that there are no vital differences between nations.

The armies of the world are chiefly composed of the working men of the world, who go to the slaughter because they are unconscious, unconscious of themselves as individuals and unconscious of the meaning of nationhood. When they become conscious, individually and nationally, that will mean the end of war and the beginning of a real Internationalism.

XVII

‘ THE IDEA OF GOD ’

IN theory, the Socialist and Labour movement, either in Great Britain or through the world, nationally or internationally; is entirely unconcerned with ‘ the idea of God.’ In practice, this movement has become the most powerful movement, because it has become the most materialistic movement, against the idea of God in any form.

By ‘ the idea of God,’ the writer refers neither to belief in dogma nor to theological definition, but simply to a spiritual as opposed to a materialist concept of life, carrying with it some apprehension of a Will and Purpose behind the universe.

We have always declared it from our platforms as in our press that ‘ the Labour movement has nothing to do with a man’s religion.’ The writer has hundreds of times made the assertion in common with his comrades and, at the time he made it, believed it. As a matter of fact, the Labour movement has in our times as a whole, and always excepting certain sections, gradually resolved itself, none the less powerfully in that it has done so largely unconsciously, into an anti-religious and anti-spiritual movement.

This, like so many other similar statements in this book, will be vehemently denied by all those well-meaning people who, themselves often

'religious,' can only see the things immediately lying around them, nor is the writer at pains to deny that even seven short years ago he would have denied it as strenuously and as indignantly as any one of them, nor would he deny to-day that the assertion is less true of the British than the Continental movements. Such people, being part of the British labour movement, and, as is so often the case, knowing little or nothing of the Continental movements, and even when they have had an opportunity of studying them having been blinded by that curious myopia which is so peculiar to certain types of British socialists when mixing with their Continental fellows and springing from their insularity, will naturally point to the fact that almost all the leaders of the Independent Labour Party, for example, have been 'religious' men and women of spiritual outlook. They will as naturally point out that the British labour movement has always had large numbers of clergymen in its ranks, and that even the Church Socialist Society was formed for the express purpose of permeation of socialism by the church and the church by socialism. And they could, if they cared, state with every claim to accuracy that the rank and file of the British Trades Unionists are still, if not always church-going or chapel-going folk, more or less believers in 'the idea of God.'

What they would not admit, because they as yet scarcely realise it, is that despite the above, the whole trend of the labour movement even in Britain, as has been demonstrated in the preceding pages, has been in the later years more and more

away from spiritual conceptions and towards materialist conceptions. Nor have they ever understood, as the writer has had the opportunity of observing repeatedly when attending International and other congresses abroad, the fact that the overwhelming mass of the continental socialists, whether one takes Germany, France, Italy, Austro-Hungary, or the Scandinavian countries, and whether one considers the 'direct action' or the 'political' socialist, regard the Socialist and Labour movement as a direct counter to the idea of God in any form—or, rather, as almost any Continental Socialist would express it, and as the Bolsheviks have quite unequivocally expressed it—'to gross superstition.'

The little Communist maid of ten who not so long ago stood up in one of the open spaces of Berlin to address 'a children's communist meeting' to tell her little comrades that 'she did not believe in the swindle of God or authority,' was but repeating faithfully the lessons inculcated for two or three generations by the adults of the continental socialist movements.

To any one who has any pretence to knowledge of the attitude of the continental socialist parties to religion, the belief of the leaders of the British labour movement that in essentials, and especially in this, the most essential of all, the continental and the British movements are at one would be laughable if it were not tragic.

I will take one example of the ignorance which makes such a belief possible, using the Danish Social Democratic Party as the object lesson.

One frequently sees in the columns of the British Labour press 'fraternal congratulations' to the comrades of the Danish Socialist Party upon their striking advance towards getting the reins of power into their hands and their progress towards the ideal State. One has again and again seen British socialists, themselves sometimes ardent Christians, moved to ebullitions of joy at such progress, when really, did they know the facts, they should have been moved to tears. At the Copenhagen Socialist Congress in 1910, some of the British delegates, many of them devout religionists, were redundant in their admiration of the Danish Socialists, knowing as little of them or their real objective as though they had come from Greenland.

The writer having been a member of the Danish Party, and, speaking the language, having lectured to Socialists in various parts of Denmark and seen something of the working of the Party, ventures to indicate the chasm separating the Danish Social Democrat, not only upon the spiritual plane, but upon all others, from his British brother.

The Party, now almost the most powerful party in the country, consists of men and women quite openly pledged to fight the spirit of religion in any form. One may state without the slightest fear of exaggeration that the only goal of this Party of materialists is the goal of four or five meals a day and the abolition of the priest, the church, and the whole idea of any life beyond that of the beasts that perish. Originally starting with the ideals of the Independent Labour Party, through

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

pioneers of great self-sacrifice and unflinching devotion, the movement with 'success' has sunk steadily into the morass of materialism, until to-day it has become a sepulchre of idealism. Based dogma for dogma and phrase for phrase upon the Marxian German Socialist Party, its leaders have elevated Marx into a sort of bible, but, as one of these leaders admitted to the writer: 'In the 400,000 who vote for the party, there are probably not 20,000 who are convinced Socialists or who know anything about Marx. They vote Socialist because they know that Socialism means more money for less work.'

It is literally true to say that to-day the Danish Social Democratic Party is regarded with loathing and contempt by the men and women of all parties who still retain a spiritual idea of life and humanity, and it is a loathing shared by the Danish syndicalists for their Socialist 'comrades,' but only for political reasons.

This being so, the spectacle of Messrs Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson addressing the crowd of 100,000 who recently gathered in Copenhagen to celebrate the jubilee of a Party which is as divorced from the ideals of its pioneers as are some of the churches of to-day from the teachings of their Master, and rejoicing fatuously, because ignorantly, in 'its promise for the future,' is one to amaze both gods and devils—the former to tears and the latter to laughter. To imagine that in any single thing, except bureaucracy, a Methodist lay preacher like Mr Henderson, a deeply religious man, has anything in common

192

with two point blank materialists like Messrs Borbjerg and Stauning, the two Danish leaders, who hate the whole idea of God, is an International joke.

I remember a friend being asked in Denmark by some Danish socialists, who had been astounded at witnessing the apparition of three British labour leaders upon their knees in prayer at a little place called Lyngby, outside Copenhagen, whether such 'superstitions' were part of the British party dogma!

It was some of the leaders of this party, who, incidentally, during the war, cold-shouldered the British Socialists in every possible way and allied themselves warmly with the German Socialists, instead of, as 'Internationalists,' remaining neutral, who visited Brussels during the war upon German invitation and whilst the Germans were occupying it. And it was these gentlemen who, believers in 'democracy' and freedom, were shameless enough to inform the people of Denmark that the Belgians 'were leading a merry life under the occupation and were quite content.'

The case of Denmark is specifically mentioned here because it is so symptomatic of 'the Great Illusion' of Social Democracy throughout the world—that Socialists and especially working men are bound together for the same goal and have the same concepts. But it has now passed the stage of illusion to become deliberate and sometimes almost dishonest illusion, because the Socialist refuses to face the facts and admit that he has been building the International Temple upon the sands of illusion.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

That the British Trade Unionist is beginning to realise, however dimly, something of all this is shown by the decision of the General Federation of Trade Unions at their 1921 Congress to take part in an International Trades Union Congress of 'English-speaking' peoples for the unification of trade union policy in the English-speaking countries. This decision, it was stated, was an attempt to wrest the Labour and industrial movement from the theorists of the Continent—that is, to fight the Continental adherents to the theories of Marx and, presumably, to fight the 'Class War.'

Both in Germany and in Holland it has again and again been borne in upon the writer how utterly unbridgable were the differences of concept upon religion between the Continental and the British or American movements, just as it has been demonstrated in England how vital were these differences between materialist sections like the Communists and Social Democrats on the one hand and the Independent Labour Party on the other.

It has become the fashion in the world to divorce politics and religion, always using the word in the spiritual rather than the theological sense, and the Socialist movement has not escaped it. But all such artificial separations become as naught when it comes to the test. Still, to-day, the ultimate, the most far-reaching thing that separates civilised humanity is the difference of concept upon the idea of God. The Great War has already tried to teach labour the lesson that nationality and national conceptions play one of the major parts

in the division of mankind—it has yet to learn that there is something even still deeper, more inevitable in its effects, and that is the outlook of human beings upon the things that lie beyond the material.

One is not here speaking of theological differences. Nor is one denying that some of the noblest and finest men and women who have existed have believed themselves quite sincerely to be helping humanity by fighting 'the idea of God' in the sense of theological definition, though such men and women, nominally materialist, have actually taken the spiritual view of life and living, and have been unconsciously 'on the side of the angels.' But what one is speaking of is the fundamental, irreconcilable difference between the materialist proper with his goal of fleshly or purely intellectual satisfactions, and the anti-materialist, between that overwhelming mass of the International Socialist and Labour movement to-day which steadily trends to a material conception of existence and that minority, a small and narrowing minority, which regards the body as of little importance by the side of the soul—even though it seldom uses the word and is often scarce conscious of its meaning, and, indeed, only urges the care of the former in order that it may be a more worthy vehicle for the latter.

'I would not cross the road to give you three meals a day and a bigger hog-trough,' I once heard a young Socialist propagandist say to an East-end audience in the early days. How many of the labour leaders would say it to-day?

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

The writer was amused some time ago to be told by one of the women leaders of the British Labour Party that 'masses of brilliant and spiritual young men and women are pouring into the Party.' Possibly they are, but it is equally assured, as in the case of the speaker herself, that they will either remain in the Party at the cost of individual repression, spiritual and otherwise, or, discovering the difference between 'phrase and fact,' will come out again, as many indeed are doing.

It is no accident that thousands of idealist young men and young women, tired of the older parties, searching eagerly for a party of ideals and earnest democrats, hold themselves aloof from the Labour Party because, as many of them have said to the writer, it is a party of a machine without 'soul.'

But whatever may be the attitude of the British labour movement to-day, it is beyond cavil that, excepting such sections as the Social Democratic Federation, which from the beginning was always materialist and anti-religious, though in practice often neither the one nor the other, the whole driving force in the first days of the British Socialist and Labour movement was religious in spirit if not always in name.

Our earlier labour demonstrations at least replaced the surplice by the red tie and the cross by the red flag—but the spirit behind them was the spirit of religion. We had and have our 'Socialist Sunday Schools' throughout the country. Our 'labour hymns,' as we called them, were ethical pap set often to the hymn tunes of our childhood with the acid of dogma extracted, and, as is

196

everywhere known, even to-day we always chaunt the 'Marseillaise' like a funeral dirge—which, indeed, has always been the Britisher's concept of revolution. While the doleful, British 'For he's a jolly good fellow,' droned with conventicle snuffle, which Labour reserves for its archangels, that is, for its leaders, is enough to make them, like the other and lower angels, weep.

As a matter of fact they don't. Instead, they smile from ear to ear. But that is by the way.

Nobody has ever been able to get the 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' spirit out of the British Labour movement. But then, nobody has ever tried.

An ex-cabinet minister and labour leader, whose name is known throughout Europe, said to the writer a little time ago: 'I have not the slightest doubt that Arthur Henderson's concept of running the Empire when Labour comes to power is that of a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon in a Baptist chapel!' Mr Arthur Henderson, amiable, sincere man and lay preacher, fills, it may be said, the pulpits of 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoons' with much satisfaction both to himself and his congregations.

It is easy to laugh at all this spirit of religion, the spirit which has made the British labour movement essentially a 'faith' rather than a 'politic,' a movement which in its beginnings seemed to form the natural refuge of those who had gone out from the temples of dogmatic religion. A cheap sneer can be levelled at such phenomena as that of one Labour Party Congress which I attended, when it was stated that more than half

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the delegates present were teetotallers and many of them members of the chapels. Nor is it difficult for the light-hearted scoffer to find in the British Labour ranks the weaknesses of the sectarian, Little Bethel spirit which, in matters of religion, has made England, Scotland and Wales a by-word upon the Continent.

And yet, after one has worked in foreign labour movements and had the opportunity of their intimate study, one must confess that, in its earlier days at least, the British labour movement had a spirit unique—a spirit that at one time seemed to point to a purging of the materialist dross from Labour, to set a path for the Labour movements of the world and to inform the bread-and-butter struggle by the struggle spiritual.

Only all this should not blind us to the ugly fact that British labour, like labour in other parts of the world, is, as has already been indicated, drifting slowly but inevitably to the materialist slough from the idealist road upon which it set out.

The movement to-day is fast losing the 'religious' note. It retains only the sentimental.

Despite all this, the leaders of British labour, or some of them, still cling to the idea that socialism, whatever form it may take, and the working man because he *is* a working man, all ultimately lead to 'the idea of God,' much upon the same principle presumably as the Buddhist regards all men and all religions, whether good or bad, as ending finally in the Buddhist Nirvana. It is a convenient belief and in the case of the 'religious' labour leader a perfectly honest one, unfortunately !

But there are two gentlemen in Russia, Lenin and Trotzy by name, who have not the faintest doubt in the world that socialism leads and must lead inevitably to the destruction of ‘the idea of God,’ and so much is this the case that we have seen the Bolshevist régime forbidding the teaching of the Bible, or, for that matter, of any book tending to inculcate so blatant a ‘superstition’ as the existence of any life except this, of any God except Karl Marx, and of any end save the satisfaction and development of brain and body. It has even now placed its leaden hand, that of Commissary of Education Lunatcharsky, upon any fairy tale which mentions ‘fairies or angels,’ replacing it by perfectly sterilised and proper bolshevist tales in which only ‘facts’ are given, and in which little lifting feet are clamped to earth.

So it is that we find that simple and devout High Churchman, George Lansbury, editor of the *Daily Herald*, declaring himself Bolshevist and believing that Mr Lenin and himself have identically the same goal—only that Lenin perhaps does not know it! But there is one gentleman who at least has no illusions on the point—and that is Mr Lenin himself.

But Lenin is not alone in his opposition to the religious idea. I have known several of the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party, but, quite apart from belief in a God or a Conscious Purpose behind the universe, which, to Continental Socialism, with its often vast ignorance of history except that part of history which fits its theories, is but a reversion to a mediæval superstition which

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

man had sloughed once and for all and for the first time in the nineteenth century, I cannot recall a single one who believed in a God or in anything beyond the materialist conception of history and of life. I have never heard of a single French Socialist leader who professed such belief either in private or in public. In the Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish Socialist parties, I do not know a single leader of prominence of either sex who is other than a tacit or avowed enemy of religion in any form, or has other than a materialist concept as the goal of Socialism. In Holland, where I met several of the labour leaders, I never met one who was not a materialist both by conviction and practice. Italy, so far as I know, has none, and in fact the church in Italy is regarded, and not perhaps unnaturally, as the historic foe of a Social Democracy which, incidentally, still confuses theology with religion.

The Anglo-Saxon countries, almost alone, show the labour leader who is at the same time a believer in 'the idea of God.' It is this idea in which lies perhaps the solitary genius of the Anglo-Saxon labour movement to-day. It was shown by Charles Kingsley and his Christian Socialists in the '50's, and the tradition has persisted, or at least did so until the last few years, when the persistent preaching of the material as the end of working-class agitation has at last done its work and the British working-class, in common with that of other countries, is now being sapped through and through in its older beliefs and ideals.

'He that sups with the devil needs a long spoon—'

especially if he be a materialist devil, as indeed he usually is. But no spoon has ever yet been made which could enable the leaders of British labour to sup with the materialist devils of continental labour without being made to swallow the spoon. And they have begun to swallow it.

And of course all sorts of well-intentioned and themselves excellent men and women, especially in Great Britain and the United States, will continue to delude themselves that religion is still the heart of Labour politics and parties. In England, new recruits to Labour like the Hon. Arthur Ponsonby, have even written books on this religion in labour politics, in which they protest that the religious spirit will, as one of them said, 'protect the Labour Party from becoming a mere materialist party, caring only for wages and majorities, and from being an indifferent imitation of the parties that preceded it.' Significant protest!

Inside the ranks of the Social Democratic Federation I have known devout Churchmen of the type of the Reverend Conrad Noel. Within the ranks of the Clarion Scouts we had several devoted clergymen who gave of their best to the movement. I have known a priest in charge of a large Midland parish, also a High Churchman, an I.L.P'er who over a number of years vainly tried to bring his socialist comrades to the altar which he had erected within his own house—without success. Scores of nonconformist clergymen have passed through the ranks of the labour movement, many of whom, splendid men as a rule, I have also known. And all these men, in common

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

with devout laymen often belonging to no church and adherents of no dogma, all suffered from the same illusion, as old as the earth itself: that one can gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles.

All these men suffered from the illusion that once the body of man was well-fed and poverty abolished, then his soul would also be well-fed and spiritual poverty cease to exist. They all believed that one day, when socialism came, there would be a great trek back to the churches and chapels, or, if they were not members of any church or believers in any dogma, that a spiritual wave would pass over the Socialist and Labour movement and that its adherents would no longer 'live by bread alone.'

In order that all this might be made possible, they were all of them tremendously tactful, extraordinarily careful never to speak of God or to use the word 'religion,' imagining, poor fellows, that by so doing their policy of 'peaceful permeation' would one day bear fruit. Yet to-day, after half a century of socialist propaganda, they are farther from their goal than ever.

There are men and women in the British Socialist movement to-day who have deliberately put their ideals and their souls into shackles, and have as deliberately shut their eyes, hoping against hope for the conversion of the working man to 'the idea of God.' But some of these men and women—not many, for human nature hates to be disillusioned—are to-day discovering that the longest way round is not always the shortest way home. They are beginning to discover that there are

certain things in this world upon which compromise is impossible or if practised can only be carried out at the cost of everything that makes life something more than an intellectual gymnasium, and living something more than sensual gratification.

The compromise in the Labour movement of all countries which has prevented the men and women of inspiration from telling the working man that he was something more than a body, and dragging him from his hog-trough, is the compromise which throughout the world has helped to sap the morale of the working man, and, to put it bluntly, 'to make a fool of him.'

And it is the realisation of this which in the movement of the new democracy will split the Labour movement. The first great break was the Communist break, when the materialist Bolsheviks broke away to frankly declare belief in God as the enemy and the physical force which is the instrument of materialism as the remedy. They have left behind them in the hog-trough a great indifferent mass of working men, but amongst them that tiny minority of thinking men and women who, because they take the spiritual concept of life, will not be content to remain in it.

The next step will be the breaking away of that minority, who will once more go out into the working world of democracy and preach fearlessly 'the idea of God' and the gospel of anti-materialism—but that will be the gospel of 'spiritual democracy,' the natural enemy of the 'materialist democracy' which was its predecessor.

XVIII

LABOUR AT THE CROSS-ROADS

DEMOS to-day is standing at the cross-roads of destiny. Every man and every movement at one time or another of his or its life comes to one of those signposts which stand on the long road that stretches to the Unknown Goal.

Before the working man, whatever his country, there lie to-day three roads, only one of which can bring him and the democracy he represents to fulfilment.

One of these roads is the road of 'Direct Action,' a rough, but apparently short, quick road, with as its goal, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The second is the road of the 'Mass-Vote,' a broad, smooth, and easy way, leading to the Paradise of the Majority, which is really the hell of self-satisfied bureaucracy, with, ultimately, dictatorship by the bureaucrat. The third, a narrow, difficult, and seemingly unending road, is the road of 'Self-development,' which, in the fulness of time, after ceaseless struggle and effort, alone could find the only goal worth achieving—the goal of a Spiritual Democracy.

It is necessary that we here should look ahead with a view to outlining the possible future of Democracy, so far as it may be possible for finite humanity to do so. That such anticipations are

not always false has been repeatedly shown within the last two generations, when men of imagination and vision like Mr H. G. Wells have been able to foresee with extraordinary accuracy the evolution of society, and that sometimes twenty years before the events themselves.

The writer, whilst making no claim to any prophetic gift beyond that open to large numbers of his fellow beings, is basing his forecasts in this chapter upon what has already been seen in the evolution of democracy during the past decade. The war itself has done more than anything else to tear away the veils from the future for those who care to look first behind, then before.

If Demos, as indeed is not at all impossible, ultimately plunge headlong into the path of 'Direct Action' on which he had entered, but from which, for the time, he has seemed to recoil, it will be due to certain distinct causes.

We have traced clearly how the war first drove Demos to direct action and physical force. The causes, psychological and physical, of that apparently resistless impulse have been plain to follow. Now that the pendulum has begun to lose its first impetus towards direct action, we have been seeing in the various European countries, following upon the apparent break-up of Bolshevism in Russia, and with the Russian stimulus to revolution largely removed, the working man turn once more, although half doubtfully, towards the beaten track of the vote and constitutional action. (Of course, it is always possible that the Labour pendulum may not swing back either to political or to 'direct'

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

action, but may take an entirely new direction, now unsuspected. The pendulum of society in its evolutionary movement, we are sometimes apt to forget, varies not only in speed but in direction. But it seems improbable to-day that the pendulum of labour will take an entirely unsuspected path. That is something for the more remote future.)

With this mental reaction there has in many of the European countries run a wave of reaction through the employing and governing classes which for one hundred years has had no parallel, and which has weakly had its reflex in the middle class beneath. There has been a determination, none the less determined in that it was implicit rather than explicit, unconscious perhaps rather than conscious, for the world's 'strong men,' seizing their opportunity, once more to take the reins of evolution from the hands of hesitant democracy, there has been a resolve to drive the chariot of evolution along old paths, long forgotten and untrodden, and with all this there has come the power of the new plutocracy, in which the modern plutocrat has replaced his predecessor, the aristocrat, and so created the aristocracy of the Twentieth Century—the aristocracy of money.

Not only are the leaders of the plutocracy but the leaders of democracy playing with forces so overwhelming in their potentialities, so entirely incapable of control, that one can only compare both plutocrat and democrat to-day to children who, having found a box of matches, have got into a powder magazine.

If the world's 'strong men' realise the forces

with which they are playing and use the power which fate and the war has thrust into their hands judiciously, then the workers of the world will not be driven into the path of physical force or direct action, and a terrible collision, in other words—universal Civil War will be avoided. If, on the other hand, as seems to be true of certain sections of short-sighted employers, the present advantage is pushed up to the hilt and the opportunity used to depress wages by the threat of unemployment and to reduce the worker to the stage of helot, then nothing can avert the final explosion in which society itself may disappear. As we have already said before, there is no man so dangerous as the man who has nothing to lose.

It has to be remembered that forces are at work day and night to drive malignly the workers into the path hellward. Not only is there the possible pressure from the short-sighted 'strong man,' but there is a secret stimulus which will yet show itself once more although perhaps in new forms.

The world with its usual shortness of memory appears to regard the Russian Bolshevik menace as past. With the reversion to a sort of state capitalism on the part of Lenin, the Russian Dictator, the entering into trade and other agreements by the Bolshevik government with outside capitalist governments, and that veil of silence which seems gradually to be falling over the Russian Experiment, not only the average man but the statesman is inclined to believe that Nikolai Lenin 'has seen the error of his ways,' that Russia

herself will gradually settle down into a sort of pre-war Russia but without a Czar, and that we shall hear no more of the nonsense of a Bolshevik world-propaganda.

That is the theory. What are the facts ?

The first fact is that Nikolai Lenin is an absolutely genuine man—fanatical to his marrow—a man of the genius of a Napoleon, with a power of organisation and of ‘permeation’ that has possibly never been matched, for he is the Propagandist extraordinary. He has gathered about him some of the most brilliant and fanatical men and women to be found in the socialist movements of the world, and if he has apparently given up the idea of converting the earth to Bolshevism, it may be taken as assured that he is only drawing back to spring when the time is again ripe, as indeed can be discovered by any one who takes the trouble to visit Russia and get at the facts.

The average man imagines that the Bolshevik propaganda, as such, has practically ceased. The actual fact is that this propaganda is ceaseless and untiring in every trade union in Europe to-day, although the word Bolshevism is rarely used, and this can be proved by going behind the scenes of any Union either in Great Britain or the continent. The Moscow Internationalists are as set, more set, to-day than they have ever been upon world-revolution, the overthrow of the capitalist system, and the replacing of it, not by Socialism, but by that ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’ which is the new autocracy of our times.

How could all this be otherwise ?

Democracy is one day going to learn that it is the minority that leads and inspires, not the majority. The world is going to learn that it is the Bolshevist minority of 600,000 in the millions of Russia which is the *conscious* minority, and that it is this minority which swings Russia and which one day hopes to swing the world, if not to-day, then to-morrow, if not to-morrow, then the day after. Next day, next month, or next year—it is all one to the Bolshevist, who, believing very sincerely and very fanatically that any or every weapon is justifiable against what he calls ‘the curse of capitalism,’ with as little compunction in the using of it as a man would have in the use of a shot-gun against a mad dog, or a modern European power in the use of poison-gas against another power, will again and yet again seek to throw the world into revolution by turning Demos on to the path of ‘Direct Action.’

Something else that the world does not realise is that it is now no longer a question of a decade, but possibly of only a few years, for our modern civilisation either to continue or to be hurled into the dust where lie the civilisations of Babylon and Persia, Greece and Rome. If, under the competitive system, ‘credit,’ that delicate razor-edge upon which the whole capitalist structure is balanced so dangerously, be not quickly repaired and once more got to function, we shall indubitably see, in the opinion of the world’s leading economists of all shades of politics and view, the whole of the present system subside without any other ready to take its place, and with

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

untutored, unready Democracy floundering in the mud of its theories.

Men and women imagine that by some magic or other, credit can be got to function. But as a matter of fact all credit rests upon 'production,' and production rests upon one thing—the working man. If the working man's powers of production continue steadily and apparently inevitably to decline—and recent statistics show that they have already declined in some trades, as in all countries, to as much as 50 per cent. as compared with before the war—then the whole credit system will come crashing to the ground, and, with it, civilisation itself and such as it is.

With the vicious circle of unemployment caused by the break-up of the credit system, and the break-up of that system causing unemployment, and with men and women of all classes uneducated to that high standard of self-control and self-sacrifice essential to any scheme of 'production for use' to replace the present system of 'production for profit,' nothing is more likely than at a later stage, when the present excessive instinctive effort towards the reorganisation of society has exhausted itself, that we shall see the working man hounded on to direct action and physical force. Men need a certain degree of degradation and despair before they can make revolt. Demos is rapidly, partly through his own fault, partly through that of others, reaching this stage—and when he does reach it we shall see not local strikes, or even sectional strikes, but we shall see 'general' and even international strikes, because in these days

of easy communication these things are as infectious as measles and as impalpable and penetrating as 'wireless.' It is not that Labour would be likely to embark upon an international 'sympathetic' strike, carefully planned. It would drift into it as Society began to go to pieces.

They will not be strikes of a higher wage. They will not be strikes of protest. They will be strikes of despair.

We are always forgetting that the whole psychology of Demos has changed at least in one respect since the war. Demos to-day is a much more 'nervy' fellow than he was. His whole nervous system is in a constant state of irritation and dissatisfaction, and in any single country we have seen the phenomena of the rapidity with which strike mania spreads.

Despite all his internal quarrels, all that weakness which is so patent to the looker on, the fact remains that there never has been a time in the story of modern industry when the wrong, real or fancied, to some single and obscure individual workman and in any country is so likely to throw a bombshell into the wheels of industry and bring the whole machine to a standstill. And what is true of any single nation might under exceptional stress be true of the nations, and we might find strike spreading from nation to nation, as indeed we did find after the end of the war, until Europe was reduced to a wilderness in which no escape of steam, no turn of wheel, and no movement of worker would be seen.

We do not always remember that men who are

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

long past the possibility of physical or mental power for personal rehabilitation or for constructive effort, as are large numbers of European workmen to-day, have just in that moment the greatest possibility for destructive effort.

If unemployment, the rising cost of living, the collapse of the credit system, all of these correlated, and the universal misery which would be the outcome, should result in finally driving Demos headlong into the path of direct action, and such fateful decision might come in the end out of some trifling and obscure incident, then it is not difficult to see what would probably be the course of events, all of them within the bounds of possibility in these days when the war has unleashed an entirely new series of destructive forces and with them an entirely new 'world-conscience' or rather consciencelessness.

The whole thing might start from 'a cloud no bigger than a man's hand.' It might be a railway-man in some English railway whom the company refused to reinstate. It might be a miner in a Welsh pit, whose very name would be forgotten after the first few weeks, who had been unfairly or fairly docked a five-shilling piece. But it might come from any other country in Europe.

If it were a Welsh miner, for example, the Miner's Federation would call out all its men and shut down all the pits, only this time we should see the sabotage of the last strike practised upon a systematic scale, and we should not see 'negotiations.' That would bring out the railwaymen and the transport workers, the other partners of the

Triple Alliance—a tocsin to prepare for industrial war would be sent out to the other workers of the country, who will not always refuse to come out when their comrades call, and who at the time of which we are speaking may have the resistless stimuli of widespread unemployment to goad them on.

Then the next stage would be reached.

The government of any European country rests, in the ultimate sense, upon the soldier, the sailor, and the policeman. One of the very first attempts—attempts which even in the past have been made more than once, as we have seen from our newspapers—would be made by the strikers to get hold of the army, the navy, and the police force. Such attempts would result in failure, because the disciplined man has another kind of soul than the undisciplined—a psychological factor always ignored by the direct actionist.

A minority of the army, the navy and the police might go over to the strikers—but the great mass would remain in the ranks and would shoot when told to do so, and the telling would not be long in the coming.

The authorities in Great Britain, as the writer happens to know, were secretly much exercised in their minds at the time of the Miners' Strike in 1921 as to whether the armed forces of the law would 'do their duty' when called upon. They might have made their minds easy. Not one soldier in fifty, not one sailor of the Navy in one hundred, and not one policeman in a thousand of any country would refuse to shoot down their fellows when called upon to do so.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

The next stage would be the pitiful attempts of the strikers to disorganise the services of the country, and the almost unanimous response of the great Middle Class to defeat that attempt at disorganisation, backed up by the armed forces of the Crown. The Middle Class has always been what the striker calls the 'blacklegging class,' and it will be so in all future strikes. Those who, like the writer, have taken part in committee work in trade unions which have attempted to organise the Middle Class such as the National Union of Clerks will be able to bear witness to the consistently hostile attitude of that class where 'labour' is concerned.

The strikers themselves would be between the devil and the deep sea. If they tried passive resistance, they would be cut off from the means of existence, from food, from clothes, and from all that makes life worth living, all these things behind a wall of steel and powder. If they tried physical force, to which they would be inevitably driven, they would be shot down.

What we should see in England, as in any other European country, would be a gigantic *battue*, in which the strikers rounded up, huddled into groups, hunted and harried underground, would be shot down like rats. There would be killing, killing, and yet more killing, and when this stage was past, and such a stage of Civil War might last over many months, or even years, there would be no more talk of direct action on the part of any labour leader who wished to escape the lamp-post at the hands of his own class, and there would be no more

labour movement—at least not in our day and generation. But there might also be no more civilisation.

.

Only, let us make no mistake about it, none of these considerations will weigh in the slightest with the Bolshevist, whether he be in Moscow or in London, in Berlin or in Paris. He will in the future as always, be obsessed with the idea that the working-man is conscious—more or less—that he knows clearly the goal towards which he is working, and that he is prepared to make great self-sacrifices and to give life itself if necessary to attain that goal. Nothing on this round globe can be done or said to persuade Mr Lenin that the army, the navy and the police, composed as they are by the working-class, are other than ‘class-conscious,’ if not *in esse* then *in posse*, for circumstances have forced him to exchange the former for the latter. And nothing will ever be able to convince him or his fellow fanatics that when the word to strike comes, the soldier will not throw down or run off with his rifle, that the navy-man will not chuck his gun-sights overboard (a favourite pastime in the early part of the century) and hoist the red flag, and that the man in blue will not throw away his truncheon, or, better still, ‘use it on the superintendent.’

The danger of such men lies not in their power to wage successful revolution, for, in the ultimate sense, successful physical revolution has never been waged in the history of the world, but in their power to send civilisation crashing to the

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

dust. Like Samson, the blinded giant, filled with fury and hate, they will not hesitate to bury themselves beneath the ruins of that civilisation if by so doing they can maim and kill their enemies.

Dismal prophecies! the world which has learnt little or nothing from the Great War, may say.

Had any man or woman ten years before the world war dared to prophesy even a tithe of the iniquities and horrors of that shocker of preconceived ideas, he or she would have been regarded as fit candidate for prison or lunatic asylum. But it is just that very war which has shown that nothing is impossible, not even that infinitely greater cataclysm which will come inevitably if Demos take the road of Direct Action.

And after White Civilisation has been shaken to its foundations by the coming of the Red peril, and perhaps flung into oblivion, its survivors may one day see rising out of the East the shadow of the Yellow Colossus, which Lenin at least has done and will continue to do his best to materialise. And so history may yet see the Chinaman or the Indian, instead of Macaulay's New Zealander, standing upon the deserted wharves of a vanished white civilisation to watch the rats as they scutter over its ruins.

XIX

IF LABOUR CAME TO POWER

IF we assume that Labour chooses for its climb to power the broad, easy way of the 'Mass-Vote,' used by an uneducated, untrained proletariat, instead of the short but rocky road of 'Direct Action,' as indeed it seems more than likely that it will, we shall see the gradual concretion of the Machine State, resistless as the formation of a crystal. All this, despite the many splits in the labour forces both before and after it has come to power. Whilst the adoption of physical force might conceivably see the crashing of civilisation, the process at least would be short and sudden, with the possibility, ultimately, of a new and better civilisation arising out of the ashes of the old. If, however, Democracy persists in the sand-bagging of society by the 'Mass Vote,' we should see, not the crashing of a civilisation, but its crumbling. We should see a sclerosis of civilisation extending over a lengthy period with, at the end, a degradation and intensive dry-rot from which it might take the White Races centuries to recover.

Demos, whether we like it or not, is in all countries in the vast majority. In nearly all modern countries the vote has given him absolute powers when he cares to use them. He has literally only to go to the polls and put a black cross on a piece of white

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

paper in sufficient numbers to assure the return of the Labour candidate—and the deed is done. Nor is there any man, however uneducated, who cannot make a black mark upon a piece of white paper.

The plan of the engineers of the Machine State is perfectly plain for all the world to see. First, as they have been doing, they are going to win over the working man by the promise of more pay for less work, and it must always be remembered that the Labour leader has a purse of Fortunatus from which to draw—that is to say, the purse of promises. Then the municipalities and local governing bodies are to be captured, which, indeed, has already been done in many European countries with extraordinary success. Finally, the parliaments of the world are to be won for Democracy.

From that moment, the average labour leader visualises a society in which the labour leader will be supreme; a society in which everything will be decided by the holding up of hands; and a society in which, therefore, inevitably, the rights of the minority would be brought to the irreducible minimum. We are beginning at times to hear of 'protection of minorities,' but any labour man who knows the minds of the labour leaders, political or industrial, will know that in their heart of hearts they subscribe to the power of the majority vote, only with the proviso secret, almost unconscious, in their hearts . . . that this vote shall always be under the control of the labour leaders themselves!

To this, as to all similar statements, there are of course some fine exceptions.

In imagination, these gentlemen see themselves attending congresses and telling the congresses what to do and how to vote. They see themselves in the Labour Parliaments of the future getting up and making speeches to the admiration of the common herd outside. And, above and beyond all, they see that common herd, docile, ready to be 'guided' by their pastors and masters, as they undoubtedly would be guided.

If it be doubted that the labour bureaucrat of the Machine State will be autocrat, or that the rank and file will acquiesce, it is only necessary to turn to the past record of the majority of the leaders of Demos. Hardly a congress before the war was held where the leaders, sacrosanct, sitting in the seats of the mighty, did not show themselves unbelievably thin-skinned to criticism from the rank and file, who sometimes protested, but more usually acquiesced. During the war, it is true, with the direct actionist getting the bit in his teeth, the leaders had at least to assume a certain amenability to discipline, but to-day, as we have seen at recent labour congresses, the labour leader, instead of taking the golden middle way of being for the rank and file guide and interpreter, is once more becoming bureaucrat and autocrat.

But quite apart from the question of becoming bureaucrat or autocrat, it is assured that the Labour leader, for the time at least, will have no difficulty in regaining his old position of dominance.

We have already seen Mr J. H. Thomas, against whom so many accusations have been hurled, possibly wrongfully, accused as he was by certain

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

sections of the labour movement of being chiefly responsible for the refusal of the railway and transport workers to come to the assistance of the miners, their comrades in the 'Triple Alliance,' in their 1921 strike, immediately afterwards triumphantly returned to supreme power at a conference of the National Union of Railwaymen by 57 votes to 17. With power so easily gained and held, it will be difficult for the labour leader of the future to resist the trend to bureaucracy and autocracy.

And when the Machine State has evolved, in which in the minds of the labour leaders a strong central caucus will 'run the country' through hordes of officials, local and national, with the accompanying rain of edicts which we have seen in Bolshevik Russia, is it probable that the bureaucrat of that day, with enormously consolidated and increased powers, is likely even to pay lip-service to the democracy which he professes to serve? Is it not assured, even as to-day almost every country in Europe where Labour is winning to power has shown it, that the bureaucrat will fast pass into the autocrat, impreguably entrenched behind his 'official' bulwarks, finally reaching what seems to be the inevitable goal of democracy in our times—a dictatorship.

And if 'the horde of officials' is not contemplated—then what is?

Under such a clockwork régime all initiative would be lamed; the artist would be looked upon as of less moment than any handworker of them all; and the individualist minority, struggling

220

ever more faintly, would be crushed beneath the iron heel—not of the capitalist, but of democracy itself: under the dead weight of the ‘Mass Vote.’

Does any sane man imagine that the labour leader of to-day knows or cares anything about the sculptures of a Rodin; the Mona Lisa of a da Vinci; or even the plays of a George Bernard Shaw? or, what is much more important, that on their present road they or their followers are ever likely to do so? Mr Shaw may think so, but if he does he is the only person who is of that opinion.

Does anybody imagine that in their smug, self-satisfaction it ever enters the mind of the average labour leader that there are men and women of all classes with strongly individual tastes in houses, books, furniture, and food? Do those of us who have known them intimately over many years and who still retain some belief in the liberty of the individual and his right to determine his own environment, believe that these utilitarian bureaucrats, with some rare exceptions—the exceptions for which we have allowed steadily throughout these pages—do not contemplate as the natural and desirable goal of labour, rows of square, box-like houses, with of course plenty of air-space to live in, or at best, the stuccoes of villadom; heavy clothes of sober Sunday black for feast-days; and, if such insignia could again be resurrected, in the secret hearts of some, the pot hat and the frock coat, which has always been associated in the mind of a certain type of Trade Union official with prosperity and general happiness? Their goal is still that of a sublimated bourgeoisie.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Here are the words of one of the most distinguished of the Labour leaders and an ex-M.P., himself one of the most militant Socialists in the country, in a recent letter to the writer, a man who has held the highest offices in the Labour movement, and who is still one of the most prominent and most active, if at times protestant, workers within its ranks, in regard to the possible coming of the Machine State, which indeed he fears. He says: 'Rather than live under such a régime, in which all individual liberty would be abolished and in which the man would become the slave of the machine, I would prefer capitalism itself, with all its disadvantages, for under it at least there is some pretence to liberty and some freedom of movement.'

We will assume that Labour has crushed its way to power by the Juggernaut of the 'Mass Vote,' and that some fine Monday morning it finds itself enthroned in Westminster, or in the French Chamber, or in the American House of Representatives. Let us see with what it would be faced.

The first thing with which it would be faced in any country, just as a Bolshevik government would be faced with it, would be the problem of feeding the millions of the working-classes. Nor would those working-classes, unless they had been so drilled and dragooned as to become mere automata, take any excuses. The Labour government had promised to provide plethora in a land of plenty. The government would have to produce it.

But the next thing the Labour government would be up against would be its own ghosts! the ghosts of 'ca' canny.'

In order to produce plethora, or even plenty, production itself would have to be increased out of all computation. The Labour government would find, as both Lenin and Trotzky have found to their bitter sorrow, that men who 'ca' canny' under capitalism are still more likely to 'ca' canny' under Socialism. It is a fact which cannot be disputed or set aside that the reason of the utter collapse of the Russian transport system under the Bolsheviks was not due to the lack of material for the repair of locomotives and rolling stock, etc., as indeed I have had it from the Socialists who investigated it, but simply because the average Russian mechanic and engineer, after Lenin had been forced to give the Russians proprietary rights in the land, preferred the *dolce far niente* of life on the land to work in the factory. In vain did the Bolshevik leaders use both threat and promise to these *embusqués* of Russia to come out from their comfortable retreats in the country into the factories and workshops 'for the sake of Russia and for the sake of Communism.' They steadfastly refused to budge an inch to save either country or comrade, just as the Russian peasant, despite his sudden conversion to Bolshevism, refused to give up a grain of corn to save starving Russia, but preferred to hide it and let it rot.

And so the Labour government of the future, carried into office by the automatic machinery of the mass-vote, behind it only votes and not men,

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

noses and not convictions, would be faced with the fact that men, working men, to-day, in their present stage of development, taught to regard the right of the majority as the right divine, having learned the materialist lessons with which they have been doped for the past decade in most European countries, would ca' canny as they had never done before under Capitalism.

What would the Labour leaders do ?

They would be as inevitably forced into the use of the Big Stick as any capitalist of them all, or as, indeed, Lenin himself, an idealist State socialist, was forced into it, or, as we have before seen, any 'direct action' government would be forced into it.

They would be compelled to mobilise the Red Army, whatever the country, whether Britain or France, Germany or the United States, and having done so, would have to call upon it to shoot down their own ca' cannying comrades, exactly as the Red Army of Russia did in repeated instances under the orders of Lenin and Trotzky, neither of whom wished to give them, but who were compelled by the ruthless drive of circumstances which masters conservative and bolshevist alike.

That of course would be the first step leading to civil war, in other words to hell, for an English workman or a French workman or an American workman is not so docile and easily driven as have been the Russian workmen, and he would resent compulsion from his own comrades as he has never resented it from a capitalist government.

A constitutional Labour government, returned

on the mass-vote, so long as the bulk of the working-class trusts to that vote rather than to education and remains in its present spiritual ignorance, would be faced inevitably and logically with dictatorship—just as we have seen a Bolshevik government would be faced with it. In fact, whether a Labour government, with the workman in his present condition, climbed to power by the mass-vote or seized power by a *coup d'état* of 'direct action,' it would ultimately be faced always with dictatorship.

In other words, the Labour bureaucrats would be reduced to the ignominious necessity of telling the socialist comrades what they had refused to tell them under capitalism—that the law of life, whether under Socialism or Capitalism, is 'Produce or perish!' that the only source of wealth is labour, whether by hand or brain, applied to the earth, from which we all draw our life.

And they would be faced with the fact to which they wilfully, for many of them are intelligent men and women who know that fact to-day, blind themselves—the fact that the working man throughout the world and still more the working woman who, since the war, in countries like England, have revolutionised the constitution of the labour movement, and who, during the war, poured into the trade unions only to pour out again, has not in any number yet reached that stage of development where work is done for its own sake (hardly anybody outside the artist has reached it!), and where men and women in the mass are prepared to sacrifice self for the sake of the community.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

Whether they like it or not, and in their hearts the majority of them know it, men and women are still driven primarily in the field of labour by the stimuli of gain, and the preservation of self, just as their masters are driven primarily by the lust for power. Men and women of the working-class in the mass, and always excepting that tiny handful of idealists of whom we have so constantly spoken, still do their work only under the fear of unemployment and poverty, and it is as assured as anything can be that these spurs to endeavour will be used persistently and ceaselessly by the evolutionary gods until they no longer become necessary, and can be replaced by the splendid spurs of self-sacrifice and 'community sense,' as they at one time in the labour movement seemed to be beginning to be replaced.

If the labour leaders want full demonstration of the fatuity of their belief that Demos will win his way to liberty primarily through improvement of his material conditions, or that he is yet ready to take power, they have only to look at the facts of the war. When the European workman was receiving double wages in certain countries, and especially in the neutral countries, during the war, as the writer had opportunity to observe, he did not spend his increased money on books or self-improvement, but on food and beer and pleasure. Those who during the war visited countries like Holland and Denmark will not readily forget the deterioration of large sections of the working-classes in those countries, due to the way in which they wasted their increased wages.

Demos may beat his way to power through the bludgeon of the mass-vote. He may one day, and certainly will one day, find himself seated enthroned in Westminster as in the American Congress Chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, and the other parliaments of the world. But when he has reached his ambition he will find himself farther than ever from his goal, and it may even be that his failure may throw democracy once more into the melting pot and see a recoil to the slave-state. He will find, as all mankind has found throughout the centuries, that revolutions are made not behind the barricade but in the brain; not in the holding up of hands but by the slow and tortuous evolution of mind and spirit—in other words, by that third road of ‘Self-development’ so uninviting and so difficult.

To modify even the shape of a finger, nature, with eternity before her, takes her thousands of years. To modify the shape of a man’s mind, she may take her hundreds. Demos to-day, despite all his massing together, despite or even because of the very words on his lips of ‘brotherhood’ and ‘democracy,’ and his ‘material’ improvement, is still, in the mass, essentially unchanged from the Demos of yesterday. Within the last fifty years we have seen this blinded giant, raising himself on his belly, struggling blindly towards the light, only within the last decade once more to sink down again into the dust—the dust of direct action and the mass-vote—whilst, coming up from behind, his comrades, like him, blinded, unheeding, trample him still deeper as they press forward towards the will o’ the wisps of modern Democracy.

XX

PROBLEMS FACING THE RISING DEMOCRACY

AND so we have come along a tortuous road to the problems facing the rising democracy.

The immediate problem which faces it is the question of 'labour unrest,' and its solution.

Hitherto it has always been assumed that the solution of labour unrest was to come from the employing classes, who, by some patent panacea agreed upon between capital and labour, and administered to Demos, with his consent, was to cure the feverishness of the patient. From that happy moment, strikes were to be things of the past and we were to see a sort of capital and labour millennium with prosperity all round.

All this is but a pleasant, foolish dream. The solution of labour unrest can only come from labour itself, because it can only be solved by the slow process of education and self-development of Demos. Not only education from above. Not only development from above. But education and development by himself. Demos must be his own saviour. At present he hangs upon his cross, but hangs of his own inertia. Some day he will come down from it.

Labour will one day have to face the unpleasant reality that, however ugly capitalism may be in some of its manifestations, however destructive

228

the competitive system may be upon many of its sides, the fact remains that neither the working man on the one hand nor the employer on the other is yet ready for any other system. The triple drive of struggle and ambition and gain is still necessary in the scheme of evolution. When Demos has reached such a point of development as to make a system of greater co-operation possible, then that system will come. But to make it possible he, like other members of society, will have to develop self-sacrifice and 'community sense' beyond anything which, save in the individual, we know to-day upon this very imperfect earth, taking that third road of self-development.

And to do so he will first of all have to get rid of the illusion that by changing the system he changes the human being behind it.

The pity of it all is, as we have seen in these pages, that the replacement of competition by co-operation has been apparent rather than real, and that Demos will have to deliberately retrace his steps back to the point where he first shed his ideals of spiritual for purely material advancement. But to take that step alone implies something like a miracle—the miracle of a change of outlook and of that hardest of all things—the admittance of error. One cannot see him taking it to-day.

Again and again we have had all sorts of patent panaceas put forward for the solution of labour unrest. We have seen Co-partnership tried, and we have seen it fail. We have had Bonuses for Increased Output hailed in its time as the solution,

only to find that production steadily declined. Paternalism, that most insidious, though often best-intentioned of all 'labour-workhouse' experiments has been tried by various philanthropic business men both in England and America—but it has had literally no effect upon the great labour mass, which has turned aside with contempt from free houses and free bowling greens and free gymnasiums to prefer its own private pig-styes, which indeed is only individualist human nature and not altogether bad human nature at that.

'Joint-Committees' of employers and employees like those suggested by the Whitley Report Committee in England have then been hailed as the philosopher's stone which was to solve what has become 'the Riddle of the Age'—only to result, as in after-the-war England, in a perfect epidemic of strikes.

A hundred other 'solutions' have been put forward, and some of them have deluded both employer and employee by apparently succeeding for a time. But such 'successful' experiments are invariably artificially nurtured and 'protected,' and succeed exactly as socialist settlements like those of Robert Owen succeeded—for a time, only in the end for the people who made them 'to revert to type' and for the experiments to fall to pieces at the first breath of reality.

What all the experimenters have forgotten is that *the ultimate factor of the labour problem is the factor of the human being himself*. All evolution turns upon the fulcrum of human character. As is the man, so will the system be.

Problems Facing the Rising Democracy

That is why all attempts 'to make people moral by act of parliament,' which exactly expresses most of the schemes of democracy in the later years as it expresses the schemes for the solution of labour unrest, are doomed to failure, and why as a matter of actual fact they have failed and are failing. It has been truly said that no legislator can legislate more than an inch beyond the noses of the mass.

There is no solution for labour unrest, beyond the building up of human character—a slow process but the only process, and a solution which applies not only to the working man but to his employer. All other 'solutions' are snares and they prevent the real solution by wasting time and effort. And the character of Demos can only be built up by Demos himself.

When he has developed all those qualities which to-day he lacks, his character will be changed, and when his character is changed the system will be changed, for only then will he be able to effectively use the numerical strength which to-day is but a weakness. Not one moment before and not one moment after.

When enthusiastic Socialist writers like Frank Tannenbaum, the American, assert, as he has asserted in his recent book on the labour movement that 'the control of the machine is the root problem of the labour movement;' that 'the labour movement is the *result*, and the machine is the major cause,' they are falling into that incredible phantasy of the modern Socialist and Labour writer and leader that the machine is greater than the man

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

who made it, and that it is the machine and not the human being which stands behind society. It is the eternal, infernal: 'change the system and you change the system-maker.'

It is the half-truth of Karl Marx that man is made only by his physical environment, forgetting that man also makes his environment. Like 'the solutions of labour unrest' themselves, it is the curse of the half-truth.

They forget that changing the system or 'controlling the machine' will not alter what Tannenbaum himself says in his book is the Labour movement's 'frequent narrowmindedness, its bickerings, its squabbles, its internal politics, its lack of social foresight, its jurisdictional disputes and the tendencies that have made possible the New York city building scandals.'

The very most that can be done to-day to allay labour unrest is the establishment of 'the Double Principle'—the Principle of the Minimum Wage and the even more important Principle of the Right to Work. Nothing more.

That would seem to be the most that organised Democracy in its present stage of development can reach *to-day* with permanent benefit to itself and to society. A standard minimum wage, based upon a sliding scale of wages and prices is essential to the upkeep of the standard of life. The Right to Work or Maintenance, or, as one would prefer to put it: 'The Right to Live,' that is, the provision of work for every human being of either sex able to work, or pending the provision of work, the provision of support, is also essential if we are to

keep up the self-respect both of Society and of the individuals composing it.

Beyond that dual-principle, let the workman, as his master, go out into the world of competition and, frankly, compete for the plums of life. For competition, despite all fine theories, is still essential to the development of the human being.

Some day, competition on the economic plane will be lifted from that plane to competition upon the planes of the intellectual and spiritual, as indeed in the cases of the more highly developed human beings it is now being partially lifted, but that day is not yet. It needs for its accomplishment the development in the mass of a human being of another type than we know to-day.

So much for Democracy's immediate problem of labour unrest. Now for the other problems which face the rising democracy.

The first and chief of these problems is that of goal.

The Labour movement to-day has to decide once and for all whether its goal is that of 'beer, bread, and 'baccy,' or that original goal towards which the labour pioneers set their faces—the goal of what has been called 'bread and roses,' a goal of the spiritual whilst not ignoring the material.

It is entirely certain that if Labour holds to its present material goal, we shall see increasing numbers of working men in all countries allying themselves to the Labour parties of those countries, simply because the material goal is easy of understanding and because the filling of the hungry belly is easier to grasp than the filling of the hungry

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

soul. Nobody who has watched the trend of Labour throughout the world during and since the war can doubt that Demos will clamber to power over the bodies and even the souls of society, and that we shall see attempts at Labour governments in several European countries, although not in America, within the next two decades.

And we shall see this in spite of the fact that, as was said at the opening of these pages, the labour movement, not only of Great Britain but of all countries, is honeycombed through and through by differences of outlook, differences of tactics, and various other differences theoretical and practical. The British labour movement will, for example, probably split into two or even three parts within the next ten years, into the 'all-reds' and the 'pale-pinks,' and, that more vital difference, into those who have a spiritual and those who have a materialist goal. But none of these differences will radically affect the clamber to power by the sheer dead weight and inertia of the mass of the working-class, who will continue to hold up their hands and to count their noses and to follow their leaders—until they both fall into the ditch of 'success' and experience.

For it has to be remembered that the ardent spirits in any movement form a very small minority, and with the gradual crystallisation of the Machine, gathering momentum as it grows, and losing soul, we shall see such minorities reduced to impotence . . . for the time.

The next problem facing the rising democracy is that of tactics.

Democracy has even now not made up its mind as to whether it will use 'Direct Action' or the 'Vote' in its march to power, and, in the case of the latter, the vital question as to whether 'noses' or 'brains' are to be the determinative factors in its inspiration and guidance.

Demos for the moment and in the reaction which has followed the widespread after-war unemployment in Europe, is cowed, and scarcely takes the trouble to use his vote inside his own unions, as has been shown in the votes, for example, taken in Britain upon the continuation or otherwise of the 1921 Miners' Strike and in the Générale Confédération du Travail of France, where, in the midsummer of 1921, upon questions of striking or not striking, the votes cast fell by as much as fifty per cent. in many unions. But from this there will probably come another reaction, and it is still not impossible, as Russia gets time to pull its bolshevik soul together, that, with the resultant world-propaganda, we shall see attempts at revolution throughout Europe... but only if, as does not seem impossible, the present attempts at the reconstruction of society go to pieces with the widespread unemployment and strikes which would follow.

If Direct Action and Physical Force finally carries the day, we may, as we have said, see the break up of civilisation as we know it and persistent Civil War, with Demos smashed to earth at the finish. This, of course, would very effectively solve the problems of democracy, for there would be no democracy left.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

On the political plane, the problem that faces democracy is the problem of entering politics without losing ideals. So far it has neither solved nor attempted to solve that problem, which indeed is a problem that faces all parties, and the result is that we are presented with spectacles like that of the gouty, comfortable-looking gentleman, leaning upon his sticks, whom the writer met the other day just outside the House of Commons, entirely sceptical and self-satisfied, whom he remembers only fifteen short years ago as an enthusiastic young idealist, eager to carry his ideals into the House and through it into the nation.

Lord Morley discussed this very question some time ago with a prominent labour leader and former M.P. known to the writer. The labour leader, himself disillusioned with the leaders of labour in parliament and confessing his disillusionment, said, sadly, that so far as he could see the only thing to do was to keep certain men as 'missionaries' to the movement and sternly segregate them from the blight of politics, whilst keeping others, so to speak, 'to do the dirty work' of the politician. Lord Morley replied that until the propagandist could be the politician there was not much hope for any movement. And one ventures to think that Lord Morley was right.

But this problem, like so many of those others, hinges upon something else—the problem of education, not only intellectual but spiritual. (Incidentally, we are always speaking about 'education' as a sort of magic key to open all the doors of the world to Demos, whereas no brain

change can be of any use unless it first be informed by a change of spirit.) When the Augean stables of Democracy in all countries have been cleansed by the pouring in of new ideals and by a new stream of conscious thought coming from the minority, the problem of politician and propagandist will solve itself. So far, Demos in politics has shown himself but little more idealist, but little more honest, and but little less susceptible to wire-pulling than the wicked opponents whom he professes to despise.

To take two concrete cases out of many.

The British Parliamentary Labour Party, as has been demonstrated in these pages, and as indeed has been stated many times by some of its own members, still imperfectly ground into the machine, has itself become a machine-party, in which ideals and idealists can have no place and in which its members, however intelligent and however enthusiastic, become mere voting cogs.

The German Social Democratic Party, not only during the war but especially since the war, when its political power became so enormously enhanced, has shown itself as impatient of the ideas of other sections of the party as was ever Prussian Junker, and it is and has been the bitter complaint of the Independent Social Democrats, voiced through leaders like Georg Ledebour, that they have been as ruthlessly suppressed and harried by their own comrades as they originally were by the German military régime.

On the industrial plane, Labour is faced with a host of problems in all countries, but here it will

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

suffice to take, as in many cases fairly typical, the problems facing the British movement.

There is first the problem of 'human nature !' The problem of getting rid of the official job-hunter, of getting the best men, irrespective of influence, into the executive posts, and, above all, of preventing bureaucracy. With all this, and directly, goes that hoary problem of 'over-lapping.'

In the British Labour movement, something that is paralleled in other labour movements, we have first of all the Parliamentary Labour Party, with its annual Labour congresses. Then we have the annual Trades Union congress at which exactly the same speeches are made upon exactly the same subjects, in exactly the same way as at the annual Labour Party Congress. Finally, we have the General Federation of Trade Unions, which is practically the same thing all over again—the same resolutions; the same discussions; and the same voting.

(It is an interesting sidelight upon the sectionalism and 'solidarity' of Labour that Mr W. A. Appleton, the Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions, in his article upon it in the *Labour Year Book*, writes: 'There is still a tendency . . . to regard the Federation as an institution into which you must pay the minimum contribution and from which you must extract the maximum benefit; while the stupid fear that the Federation may become stronger in money and influence than the individual organisations affiliated.' Out of 1500 Trade Unions which in the great Trade Union Federation campaign of 1903 might have

238

Problems Facing the Rising Democracy

affiliated, only 100 did so, and even thirteen years after only 146 had so affiliated!)

Of course these three bodies, despite all attempts to absorb or unite or abolish them, continue to function because the abolition of any one or two of them or the unification of all three means that some officials are going to be thrown out of their jobs, something that is not only perfectly well known but is a by-word in the Labour movement. And all this, although practically not a single man in the movement has ever attempted or would to-day attempt to justify their independent existence upon the plea that they were so better serving the working class movement.

With the problem of the abolition of the 'job-hunter' goes the question, so strongly raised in our times, not only as to whether leaders are to be obeyed, but whether the principle of leadership is to be admitted by democracy. Whether the trade union leader is to be a walking delegate at the mercy of the rank and file who have elected him, or whether he is at least to have some free decision at the arbitration board. In other words, whether the elected leader is to be a dummy or a parrot, a vote-hunter who, knowing his place depends upon his cajolery of the voter, is prepared to be led in order to lead, or whether he is to be a human being with the right to independent thought and initiative after election.

And with this goes the opposite problem—the problem of preventing the formation of the bureaucrat and his slavish following by the rank and file. For this is the Scylla and Charybdis with which

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

the Labour movement in all countries is ever threatened. The problem of providing leaders who are at once interpreters and guides has never been solved.

But, once more, behind all these problems lies the human factor.

And then quite apart from the more immediate problem of its attitude to the triple-problem, already dealt with at length, of War, Nationality, and Religion, and the solution of such problems as training for Government, to-day so largely ignored by the Labour movement in all countries, and the need for the 'big' as opposed to the 'parish pump' idea in politics, with a world instead of a class perspective, for that Bogey-man of Socialism, the Class War, who has so often frightened and fooled Demos, will have to go, the rising democracy will one day have to face the biggest problem of all—the problem of Majority-Rule. It is the problem upon which the Democratic Experiment, the first time in the history of the world such an experiment has been made on such a scale, may break to pieces.

The real problem which faces the rising Democracy is just this problem—the problem of securing within the limits of the Democratic State the fullest possible representation for minorities, remembering always that all progress comes from such minorities, and ultimately from the individuals composing them, as individuals. That is Labour's biggest problem.

For Labour may rest assured that so long as human beings possess adventure, courage, and initiative—so long as they are something more

Problems Facing the Rising Democracy

than mere automata, there will always in any age and under any circumstances be a minority protestant against the dead-weight of the mass, whether shown by ballot or by bullet. In a word, the supreme problem with which democracy is faced, is the Individual.

There are to-day in every community men and women, not only predatory men and women seeking to exploit their fellows for profit, but men and women animated by the love of their fellows, who, with a deathless passion for liberty, would rather live in a desert and be free than hog it amongst the fleshpots of bureaucracy. This is no capitalist bogey—it is the outstanding fact of our time, perhaps of any time.

If Democracy banish such men and women beyond the confines of the Democratic State, they will have banished inspiration and progress. The problem which faces Democracy is not only the retention of such men and women but the delegation of powers which will give them the leading voice in the control of the future democratic state.

For, let it never be forgotten, the only justification of Democracy is that it elect leaders superior in brain and spirit to the rank and file who elect them. Democracy is no heaven-sent principle. Like all other principles it can only be justified of its fruits. If the mass can not or will not elect the master-mind, then democracy will be thrown on the scrap-heap of evolution as one more experiment which has been tried and failed.

XXI

‘WHAT SHALL LABOUR DO . . . ?’

WHAT shall Labour do to be saved ?

To be saved not only from itself but to save society ?

Before answering that question, the writer wishes to say how well he knows that any counsel ventured by him or others will be laughed to scorn by the men and women who, gorged on votes and ‘success,’ sit enthroned in the House of Labour; how his contentions, despite the fact that many of them are contentions to be found not only within the periodicals of Labour and on the lips of the prominent workers in the Labour movement quoted here, but on the lips of Labour critics throughout the world, will be treated either as false or chimerical, and how, even in the hearts of men who know full well that all is not right with Labour, the whole will be treated as ‘words, words, words.’

Yet, despite this assurance in the mind of the writer, he will venture to state the conclusions to which he and, as regards some of them at least, many others have come inside the Labour movement. They may be regarded as so many counsels of perfection, but whether that be so or not they form at least in the writer’s opinion the only way by which the Democratic Experiment in our time

and generation can be rescued from the fate which otherwise seems inevitably to await it.

But this rescue can alone be effected by a tiny minority of thinkers inside the labour movement, who can only make their appeal to the vast mass of their followers who, instinctively, at heart, wish to do right for themselves and for society. Of all classes the writer believes that the working-class is perhaps the truest in its instincts, if only because it is closest to the realities of life and because it is the struggling class. It is when classes, like individuals, cease to struggle and become 'successful' that their consciences and their objectives become warped.

It will be the task of that tiny minority inside the Labour movements of all countries to cry 'Halt!' to Demos upon his present path. It will be their task to say to him: 'The war, combined with "success," has switched the Labour democracy from its old path of idealism to a new and dangerous path. It is the business of Democracy to get back upon its old road.' And then, following this, Demos will have to be awakened to the fact that the goal of existence is not the belly but the soul—not gratification but development.

Only, even before we go any farther, all this means the deliberate breaking down of the working-class movement in order that it may be rebuilt. It means, for a time, splits and tearings away, And it means, whether the leaders like it or not, almost going back to the starting-point again.

All of which to the average leader, drunk on

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

votes and success, seeing behind him the apparently resistless mob-millions of Labour, will seem the dreams of a madman.

It means that this minority will have to say to the mass: 'Stop your whining! Stop all this vain talk about oppression and exploitation! Stop all this pitiful appeal of the down and outer! Your chains you yourself have forged. You hug them as you hug your delusions. They will fall away from you of themselves when you lose the illusions which keep them in place.'

Only one asks oneself: 'What leader to-day will have the courage to say that, knowing that doing so means the price of place?'

Then, if the Labour movement is to be saved, the leaders will have to tell the rank and file that the price of privilege is responsibility. They must be told that for every inch they win on the road to freedom—not only freedom from the 'capitalist oppressor' but freedom from themselves—will have to be paid by increased responsibility, by an increased sense of duty to the community apart from class, and by increased self-denial and self-sacrifice. They will have to be told the fact, known to-day to thousands of calculating minds and cowardly hearts which refuse to tell it, that the Democratic State will need an infinitely higher standard of *morale*, spiritual, intellectual, and physical, than the competitive state of to-day. And they will finally have to be told the fact that it is not voting but thinking which wins freedom.

And where to-day is the leader who will dare to

put all upon a single throw of the dice and come out in any European country boldly to tell the proletariat that 'ca' canny' is the unforgivable sin, for it is sinning against self. Who of them will say: 'Any man who does less than his best when he is working, not for his employer, but for himself, for his own self-respect and for his own development, is a traitor to himself and to his fellows? Strive for better conditions. Strive for shorter hours and better wages, if you will. But for God's sake, for your own sake, when you work, go all out!'

And who of them will tell the worker that there are even worse things than starvation and overwork, however hideous and blighting both the one and the other may be. Who of them will say to him that starvation of the mind is even worse than that of the body, and that the solution of the poverty problem, essential as it is, will but set free a whole series of new and still more vital problems? And who of them will tell him that the road to freedom is only to be tortuously trod, perhaps generation after generation, by education and by the development of self and by arduous, faithful training?

Will any of these gentlemen come out and say that the Labour Army must of all others be the most disciplined and, yet, the most thoughtful and the most individualist? That it must be an army of potential officers, in the knapsack of each of whom a marshal's baton is carried? And that, therefore, the leaders, once elected, must have the right to lead? And who is to tell the rank and file

that there are certain truths which no phrase-making, no political casuistry can sidestep—the eternal truths that lie behind all human evolution whether of master or man or race ?

Who is to tell them, as they must be told, that there is no such thing as ‘ the Right of the Majority,’ except in so far as the Right of the Minority ranks equal, and that, indeed, of all shibboleths, this ‘ Majority Right ’ is one of the most dangerous, just as dangerous in its way as ‘ the Right of the Autocrat,’ of which indeed it is the shadow ? For Demos will have to be told, and now, if he is to be saved from himself, that it is the Minority, not the minority of money but the minority of brain and spirit, which leads to-day, in any sense in which the word has real meaning, and that, despite all transitional stages, it is this Minority which always will lead. That even under the Democratic State the only claim to leadership will be the claim of spiritual aristocracy and spiritual superiority—not merely the *claim*, but the *fact*.

One almost imagines, however, that the time is fast passing, or even has passed, when this minority can tell these things from inside the Labour movement. It may be that it can only be done by coming out from the labyrinth of political labour and giving the message from the outside.

But whether this minority give the message of the new democracy from within the ranks or outside the ranks of the organised labour movement in any country, it is assured that the Democratic Experiment in its present form, despite all seeming

'What shall Labour do . . . ?'

success, despite even a temporary—for it will only be temporary—accession to power, will fail and utterly. The only hope of Democracy lies, for the reasons given throughout these pages, in the building up slowly and surely of a new movement, a movement inspired by the ideals of what the writer has ventured to call 'spiritual democracy.'

XXII

‘ SPIRITUAL DEMOCRACY ’

THE writer at least believes that nothing can now prevent the breaking away of the men and women of what he has called ‘ the new democracy ’ from the ranks of the organised Labour movement of to-day. It will break away because they will discover and are indeed already discovering that between the materialist and the anti-materialist there is a great gulf fixed, and that so long as the Democracy of our days is animated by the materialist inspiration and drives forward to a materialist goal so long will it be impossible for them to remain in that movement.

This new democracy will be ‘ the despised and scorned,’ not only of men in general, but especially of the Labour movement, partly because even those leaders and workers who know that the soul has gone out of that movement, with a well-known weakness of human nature hate to admit that they have given the best years of their lives to what is really a failure, and, so far as the others are concerned, partly because there is nothing the idealess hate more than the ‘ idea.’ For a long time it will work in darkness and silence, the members of it even often not knowing one another, but at last it will emerge into the light of day with

248

the old, finer aspirations of Labour and the experience which the failure of the Labour movement has brought.

They will cast aside the shibboleths of democracy even as democracy cast aside the shibboleths of the autocracy which preceded it, and if, in the course of time, other shibboleths should creep in, as in this imperfect world is sure, the foundations of a newer and better movement at least will have been well and truly laid for 'the eternal minorities' of the future to continue the work. Nor is it difficult to see that in the scheme of evolution no movement can hope for permanence. Evolution the experimenter casts aside movement after movement and man after man as each has done its or his work, just as it will one day cast aside the democratic movement of to-day. For has it not all eternity in which to work?

One of the first recognitions of the new movement, a recognition which in all countries and noticeably in Great Britain and the United States is to be found scattering itself across the pages of books and reviews as from the pulpit and the platform to-day, in these after-the-war days when with the degradation of ideal caused by the war there is arising phoenix-like a minority from the ashes finer perhaps than the world has ever seen, will be the vast chasms, spiritual and intellectual, chasms of training and development, separating individual from individual. There will be no more foolish attempts at the will o' the wisp 'Equality.'

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

It will frankly recognise that men and women have never been equal nor ever will be, and it will recognise that only just so far as this recognition is made is a true democracy possible.

It will realise that the Bolshevik, like his 'comrade' of the political labour machine, is no accidental phenomenon, born of passing circumstances, but is the product of certain vast and deep-set principles moving obscurely behind the riddle of life, and it will be recognised that to pretend compromise or a common democracy with either the one or the other is simply to pretend the impossible.

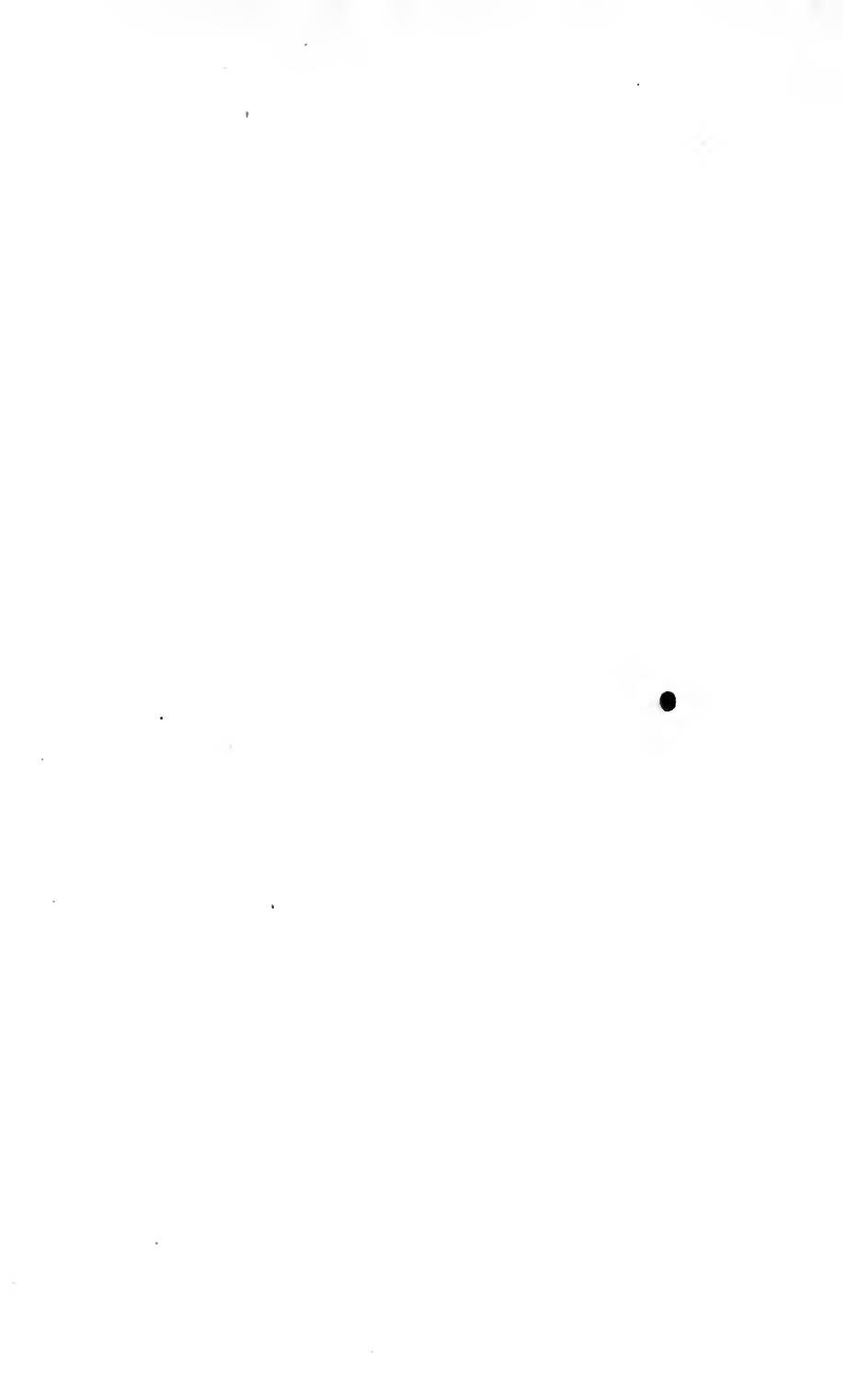
And out from this will go that further recognition, so frequently emphasised, that men and women are separated, not by class, not by economic position, but by ideal and goal, for the new democracy will draw its adherents from all classes.

The new democracy will wait its time patiently whilst it watches Labour climb slowly to power ; whilst it sees the apparent success of the Labour movement in the capture of the reins of government, local and national ; and whilst it listens to those phrases of 'brotherhood,' of 'liberty,' and of 'internationalism' which Labour and its leaders will mouth more and more, the phrases which will be 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.' It will watch, something still harder, the fine spirits who, seduced by these phrases, fearing to admit the failure of life efforts, will hold to that movement hoping to accomplish the impossible, and

when Demos has climbed to power and sits gargantuan and enthroned throughout the world, it will await with the calmness bred of conviction the crashing downwards of the Giant with the Feet of Clay.

And upon the ruins it will erect the temple of a democracy of spirit—the temple of the New Democracy.

GLASGOW: W. COLLINS SONS AND CO. LTD.



Date Due

MAY 24 1963

MAY 19 1963

MAY 25 1964

MAY 25 1964





AA 000 030 095 4

HD8390

D4

Desmond, Shaw.

Labour, the giant with the feet of
clay.

